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A translator in every journalist: dual professions in the Indonesian media

This paper endeavours to review the process of translation and the question of professional identity in Indonesia's news media. The Indonesian news media has from its inception been multilingual with language choice reflecting diverse social, political and cultural allegiances. However, these allegiances are not exclusive and as a consequence monolingualism has not been an option for most Indonesian journalists. At times the journalist can exploit translation as a tool to explore concepts or ideas from different perspectives. Alternatively, journalists have been compelled to use translation as a filter for news, the translation process often intuitively subjective.

The skills required for such a linguistically fluid environment have resulted in editors exploring a range of options in regards to recruitment with a preference for staff with a balance of good journalistic skills and good multilingual skills. In this milieu the individual carries the role of dual professions but with the prestige of the journalist profession always overshadowing that of translation which is predominantly viewed as a skill.

In exploring the fusion of the two professions this paper will consider common ethical concerns particularly in the light of the public expectations that a core role for both the translator and the journalist is the relaying of facts and ideas in a manner which is readily comprehensible but truthful.