

Translation Studies

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An entry on 'Translation Studies' in a *Handbook of Translation Studies* runs the risk of being considered superfluous, superficial or an ill-advised bout of navel-gazing. After all, what is happening in Translation Studies will surely be covered in the other entries, ranging as they do from "Adaptation"* to "Web and translation"* . But the term Translation Studies is far from uncontroversial and this entry will attempt to reduce the risks by concentrating on its identity, history, development and ideas since the second half of the twentieth century. This may serve as a context for the understanding of areas that are dealt with in more detail elsewhere in the volume, and to highlight particular questions of debate.

Translation Studies is the discipline which studies phenomena associated with translation in its many forms. Although translation* and interpreting* are practices that have been conducted for millennia, Translation Studies is a relatively new area of inquiry, dating from the second half of the twentieth century and initially emerging out of other fields such as Modern Languages, Comparative Literature and Linguistics. Like other new areas of study, it has had to fight for recognition and was additionally hampered by an entrenched bias against it resulting from a long-held disregard for translation. In academia, translation has often been perceived to be of lesser value because, as a product, it is derivative and supposedly subservient to the 'original', and, as a practice, it was associated in schools and universities with classical or foreign language learning (hence was merely a means to a higher goal of learning Greek, Latin, etc.) or with a non-academic and underpaid profession. It is only really since the 1980s that this perception has begun to shift significantly.

1. The canonization of pre-Translation Studies writing

Before the 1950s, writings about translation, which generally were produced by translators themselves and to be found in the prefaces to their works, tended to be rather unsystematic. Ideas, however insightful, were often not developed from one translator to the next. In a major early survey of English translation theory written in 1920, Flora Amos makes the point that '[t]his lack of consecutiveness in criticism is probably partially accountable for the slowness with which translators attained the power to put into words, clearly and unmistakably, their aims and methods' (Amos [1920]/1973: x). Couched in more modern terms, one might say that a consistent theory of translation is necessary in order to produce a metalanguage through which the process of translation may be discussed with precision.

That is not to say that earlier writings did not have something valuable to say. But they tended to centre on issues such as whether translations should be 'literal' or 'free', which Translation Studies has generally traced back to Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE), Horace (65 BCE–8 BCE) and St Jerome (c.347–420 CE). In the West it was the translation of the classics and of the Bible which provided the bulk of input to nascent translation theory for two thousand years (see Kelly 1979, Rener 1987). The fact that translation was essential for the spread of Christianity, most obviously through the widely used Greek Septuagint translation of the Jewish scriptures made in the 3rd–1st centuries BCE and Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible (late 4th century CE), meant that crucial questions of accuracy and the relation between source and target texts occupied centre stage in theological debate (see Religious translation*). In Protestant Reformation Europe of the sixteenth century, aided by the development of the printing press, translation also became a major political weapon of opposition to Catholic Rome. The Bible was translated into the local vernacular languages and by this mere fact contributed to the establishment of national languages. Amongst the most famous were Martin Luther's translation into German (completed in 1534) and the Wyclif (1382–95) and Tyndale translations into English (1525–6).

With such a history of translation and with a discipline that initially emerged in the West, it is perhaps not surprising that prefaces by Cicero, Horace, St Jerome and Luther have since become the 'canonized' precursors of modern Translation Studies. While what they said may no longer occupy centre stage in theory, they are acknowledged as an important part of the history of the discipline in the West and commonly anthologized in collections in English along with others such as the English poet-translators of the 17th century (notably John Dryden [1631–1700]), the German Romanticists of the 18th–early 19th centuries (e.g., Johann Wolfgang von Goethe [1749–1832], Friedrich Hölderlin [1770–1843], August Wilhelm Schlegel [1767–1845] and, most particularly, Friedrich Schlegel [1768–1834]), Victorians such as Matthew Arnold (1822–1868) and 20th century thinkers and writers such as Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), Ezra Pound (1885–1972), Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) and Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977). Important modern anthologies include Biguenet and Schulte (1989), Schulte and Biguenet (1992), Robinson (1997), Venuti (2000/2004) and Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (2006).

2. Deciding a name for the discipline

In academic circles, interest in translation grew particularly from the 1950s onwards and generally from a linguistic perspective. Prominent among the scholars of this time were the French linguist and semiotician Georges Mounin (born Louis Leboucher, 1910–1993), the US linguist and Bible translator Eugene Nida (born 1914) who brought Chomskyan ideas to the 'scientific' analysis of translation and equivalence (see Nida 1964), and, from

Canada, the comparative stylistics of the French-born Jean-Paul Vinay (1910–1999) and Jean Darbelnet (1904–1990) which was published with the subtitle *méthode de traduction* ('method of translation') in French in 1958 and in English translation in 1995 (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958, 1995). Despite this early work, the name *Translation Studies* was not proposed until 1972 as an alternative to *translatology* (French *translatologie*) or *translation science*, or *science of translating* and the German *Übersetzungswissenschaft*. The proposer was James S. Holmes (1924–1986), a US-born lecturer and poetry translator at the University of Amsterdam, in a now famous conference paper aptly entitled 'The name and nature of Translation Studies', delivered at the Third International Conference of Applied Linguistics, held in Copenhagen in August 1972. The abstract of the paper begins:

Though the study of translation and translations has a long history, and during the past two decades has begun to display more and more the characteristics of a separate discipline, there is as yet little general agreement as to what this new discipline should be called. (Holmes 1972: 88).

Holmes proposes the designation 'Translation Studies' (in lower case) which became established within the English-speaking world and beyond. This preference has come to dominate in institutional names (Centres/Departments/Schools of/for Translation Studies in many universities), as well as in the names of prominent academic associations such as The Canadian Association for Translation Studies (founded in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1987), The European Society for Translation Studies (founded in Vienna in 1992) and The International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (founded in Seoul in 2004). However, competing terms have persisted in other languages, exemplified in the trilingual title of Kittel et al.'s major handbook published in Germany as: *Übersetzung/Translation/Traduction: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung* ['Translation research']/ *An International Encyclopedia of Translation Studies/Encyclopédie internationale des sciences de traduction* ['sciences of translation'] (Kittel et al. 2004).

3. The conceptualization of 'translation'

For such an area of study, the conceptualization of 'translation' is clearly key. Yet 'translation' is far from straightforward; it may be understood as a *process* of rendering a text from one language into another ('translating', see Translation process*), a *product* (the translated text) or as a subject and phenomenon itself (e.g., 'cultural translation', 'translation in the Middle Ages'). Typically, Translation Studies has used the famous Russo-American linguist Roman Jakobson's (1896–1982) categorization of three forms of translation as a process:

1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.

2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (Jakobson 1959: 233, emphasis in original)

In Jakobson's categorization, it is interlingual translation (i.e., translation between different verbal languages, German>French, Chinese>Arabic, English>Russian, etc.), which is the focus. It has also been, and remains, the main object of study in Translation Studies. However, the definition of 'other language' is not unproblematic (is dialect considered a different language, for instance?) and this blurs the dividing line between interlingual and intralingual translation. Most importantly, though, Jakobson's definitions refer to 'signs', above and beyond the written or spoken word. In recent years this has proved valuable as the interest of Translation Studies has extended to embrace many forms of intersemiotic translation (the role of the visual, the translation of music, comics* and films, and many other forms of adaptation, etc.) including those which cross over with intralingual translation (e.g., sign language interpreting*, audio description, intralingual subtitling*) and interlingual translation (e.g., interlingual subtitling).

Also influential for the development of the discipline was the terminological distinction made by Otto Kade (1927–1980) from the renowned Leipzig School. He proposed *Translation* (upper case) as a superordinate term to cover *Übersetzen* ('translation', lower case) and *Dolmetschen* ('interpreting'). The definitions he suggests (Kade 1968: 35; in Snell-Hornby 2006: 27–8) exceed a simplistic distinction between written and spoken performance by focusing on the constraints of the activities. Hence, 'interpreting' is carried out orally but from a text that is presented once-only in real time and which permits little revision or correction; written 'translation' is performed from a normally fixed, written text which usually allows detailed and repeated correction.

4. What does Translation Studies study?

As well as suggesting a name for the discipline, Holmes (1972, 1988) also discusses its 'nature'. He explicitly proposes a structure of an 'empirical discipline' with a 'pure research' side divided into (1) 'Descriptive Translation Studies' and (2) 'theoretical Translation Studies or translation theory'. The goals of pure research are "to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and [...] to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted." (Holmes 1988: 71). Holmes adds a third area – (3) 'Applied Translation Studies*' – in which the findings of the pure research are applied "in actual translation situations, in translation training, and in translation criticism". Holmes' attempt to systematically classify the subject has, he says, the advantage of revealing which

areas have been most studied, and which ones "have been largely or wholly neglected". The interest in the applied side, though rather underdeveloped in Holmes' schema, also reflects a keenness to integrate theory and practice (Weissbort & Eysteinnsson 2006: 406), a question which persists in Translation Studies to this day. Indeed, since Holmes' time the questions which Translation Studies has sought to answer have multiplied, but, as above, relate specifically to process (understanding the cognitive, decision-making capacities of the translator), product (what are the features of a translated text or genre, what are the characteristics of translated language – explicitation, standardization, interference, etc. –, how do we judge translation quality*, what is untranslatable) and phenomenon (what is understood as translation by different cultures, what was translation like at different historical and geographical points, how was a specific translation or group of translations received in the target culture, etc.).

Not widely circulated until after Holmes' death, his paper has since had an enormous impact. By 1993 Edwin Gentzler was describing it as being "generally accepted as the founding statement for the field" (Gentzler 1993: 92). Holmes was also a prime instigator of international co-operation in the field, and important international conferences were convened in Leuven (1976), Tel Aviv (1978) and Antwerp (1980). Collaborators included Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury in Tel Aviv. It was the latter who brought Holmes' paper into even sharper focus in his own now seminal *Descriptive Translation Studies – And beyond* in which he begins by projecting Holmes' schema into a graphic map of the discipline (Toury 1995: 10). Toury's work provides a cogent argument for the branch of descriptive studies, with a systematic methodology that will allow individual case studies, assumptions and results to be replicated, compared and adjusted. The goal of such a descriptive branch is the identification of patterns of translation behaviour and ultimately the formulation of probabilistic 'laws' of translation.

5. The development of Translation Studies

The introduction of more systematic linguistic theories from the mid twentieth century onwards (see above) transformed the study of translation and prepared the basis for the establishment of the discipline. Since the late 1980s, Translation Studies has expanded enormously thanks to the rapid growth in practical translator training programmes, underpinned by related research and responding to a greater international demand for translation, and the general interest in translation as an intercultural phenomenon. This explosion in interest and in published research is illustrated by the growing number of research journals devoted to the field. Invidious as it may be to select just a few, among the most prominent internationally are, in chronological order of foundation, *Babel* (the Netherlands, founded in 1955), *META* (Canada, 1955), *Traduction, terminologie, rédaction* (Canada, 1988), *Target* (The Netherlands, 1989), *Perspectives on Translatology* (Denmark, 1993), *The*

Translator (UK, 1995), *Interpreting* (The Netherlands, 1996), *Across Languages and Cultures* (Hungary, 2001), *Translation Studies* (UK, 2008) and, illustrating the move to open-access online publications, the *Journal of Specialized Translation* (UK, 2004). Such has been the increase in activity that two on-line databases now offer researchers searchable databases of work in Translation Studies: *Translation Studies Abstracts* (St Jerome, 1998) and *Translation Studies Bibliography* (John Benjamins, 2004). In addition, many widely-used general volumes on Translation Studies have appeared, their number increasing significantly from the 1990s onwards: *Translation Studies* (Bassnett 1980/1991/2002), *Contemporary Translation Theories* (Gentzler 1993, 2001), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker & Malmkjær 1997; Baker & Saldanha 2008), *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997), *Introducing Translation Studies* (Munday 2001/2008), *A Companion to Translation Studies* (Kuhwiczak & Littau 2007), *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (Munday 2009) and the current project, the *Handbook of Translation Studies* (HTS).

Different attempts have been made to categorize this huge development in the discipline. For example, Chesterman (1997: Chapter 2) sees five central ideas or 'supermemes' (translation from source to target; equivalence; untranslatability; free vs literal; all writing is translating) and eight major 'stages' in their evolution through translation theory (words, word of God, rhetoric, logos, linguistic science, communication, target and cognition); Snell-Hornby (2006) describes the various 'turns' of Translation Studies from the emergence of the discipline through to a 'pragmatic turn' in linguistics, the 'cultural turn' of the 1980s, the interdiscipline of the 1990s and other turns of the 1990s (empirical, globalization, etc.).

Despite differences in perspective, a history of the discipline in the West till the end of the twentieth century can broadly be traced through the following, sometimes overlapping, moves:

1. Linguistic translation theory, including contrastive analysis of languages, and the emergence of the central concept of equivalence between source and text.
2. Functionalist approaches* to translation from Germany, including theories of text-type and skopos theory where the communicative purpose and function of the target, rather than source, text were deemed to be crucial. These were followed by text and discourse analysis approaches to translation, which have generally imported more dynamic models from linguistics (notably systemic functional linguistics) to analyse translation communication functionally. In these approaches, the focus moved away from literary translation (see *Literary Studies* and *Translation Studies**) and towards a range of non-literary texts.
3. Polysystem theory* and other systems theories, including the Manipulation School and the Descriptive Translation Studies* branch (Toury 1995; see also Pym et al 2007). The aim of many of these studies is to establish the norms of translation at different socio-historical points. For Toury (see above), the ultimate aim is to establish 'laws' of translation.

4. The 'cultural turn' heralded in Bassnett and Lefevere (1990). In the 1990s, Translation Studies borrowed or adapted theoretical models from Cultural Studies, most particularly from Feminist and Gender* Studies and Postcolonial* Studies. Questions of power and ideology, and how these are manipulated through translation, became crucial. A linguistic approach to the study of translation was marginalized.
5. A continued interest, inspired by the German Romanticists, notably Schleiermacher, in philosophical questions related to literary hermeneutics* and to ethics*. Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995/2008) has been very influential in developing an ethical critique of the translation tendencies of foreignization and domestication, most particularly in his view of the prevailing British and American publishing practices which erase characteristics of the foreign.

6. Translation Studies since the turn of the millenium

Since the turn of the millenium, Translation Studies has continued to expand in so many diverse ways. A brief description of some of the major developments can only really scratch the surface. Firstly, there has been a marked interest in the West in non-Western theories, spurred initially by postcolonial studies. It has gone hand-in-hand with the growth of Translation Studies worldwide, notably in China, India and the Arab world. Some of the publications in this area have aimed to disseminate what are deemed to be key ideas, through anthology or critical introductions, with Chinese translation discourse particularly prominent. This has begun to cause a reassessment of the pre-history of Translation Studies, taking into account the translation projects of the oral Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit and other languages to Chinese in the 1st to 3rd centuries CE and later (Cheung 2006), in the 20th century, the seminal influence of scholar and translator Yan Fu (Chan 2004). The spread has also amplified the range of languages and of historical circumstances and translation situations that are being investigated (as exemplified by the variety of papers in Hermans 2006) and has even begun to see a reassessment of the conceptualization of translation itself (Tymoczko 2007).

There has also been an increasing interest in the role of the translator rather than in the translation product. This has manifested itself in the concern for translator ethics and identity and in a strong trend towards a translation sociology*. The influence of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is very keen. In English, much work has also gone into the construction of detailed histories of translation and translators (e.g., Gillespie & Hopkins 2005 and subsequent volumes in the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* series, see Translation history*).

Another huge development has been technological. This has revolutionized the practice of translation, which in many cases involves project managers, the use of translation memory systems and other computer-aided translation* tools and the dispersal of translators

in a globalized marketplace that treats translation as one element in a globalization*-internationalization-localization*-translation (GILT) set-up. It has also had a substantial impact on translation research, with a major return to automatic and machine translation* of various types and, in process-oriented and cognitive research (see Cognitive approaches*), the rise of corpus-based Translation Studies (see Corpora*), think-aloud protocols*, eye-tracking and other aids to the observation of the translator's decision-making processes. Such research now requires significant investment in equipment and collaboration in multidisciplinary and international research teams. Furthermore, new media have generated their own sub-branches of activity and research, the most notable being audiovisual translation* (or screen translation) which has come to incorporate not only long-established dubbing and subtitling* practices but also the localization of video games, the spread of unofficial fansubbing and the like.

7. The evolving identity of Translation Studies

Given these advances, a question that is frequently raised is the disciplinary and identity nature of Translation Studies. The question is no longer that which preoccupied Holmes in 1972 (when many were unsure of the worth of Translation Studies), but rather whether there is so much fragmentation that we are really studying different or incompatible things and, a related question, whether Translation Studies should therefore be considered a discipline in its own right, or more of an interdiscipline. The problem that still confronts Translation Studies is that it (and many of its researchers) has come together out of other disciplines and for this reason in many countries it lacks a strong institutional identity. On the other hand, the fluidity of modern scholarship often privileges interdisciplinary research as a dynamic and creative force. Much good research on translation also takes place in disciplines that until recently have not obviously interfaced with Translation Studies.

In 2000, Chesterman and Arrojo's paper 'Shared ground', published in *Target*, attempted to reconcile what they termed 'essentialist' approaches to translation (where meanings are stable, and it is the task of the translator to transfer these) and 'non-essentialist' approaches (meaning is unstable, and translation itself is open to question) with thirty jointly-constructed 'theses' about the object of study. Since then, the expansion of the field has been so great that sub-branches such as Interpreting Studies* have become semi-autonomous and have begun to anthologize separately (e.g., Pöchhacker & Shlesinger 2002; Pöchhacker 2004). Advances have caused a reassessment of the metalanguage of translation (Gambier & van Doorslaer 2007). Van Doorslaer's own contribution to that volume, leaning on his experience in co-developing the online *Translation Studies Bibliography*, challenges the Holmes classification and supports "an open and descriptive map" of the subject to provide an expandable framework for research (van Doorslaer 2007: 220). Importantly for an interdisciplinary field,

a flexible framework allows new research to be incorporated and interrelationships to be established especially when new technologies and models are constantly being tested. Furthermore, the expansion of MA and doctoral programmes in Translation Studies, boosted by international research methodology summer schools such as those organized by CETRA at Leuven and by Edinburgh-Manchester-University College London in the UK and Hong Kong, have had a positive effect, meaning that there is a growing number of younger researchers who have trained specifically in Translation Studies.

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