

## The position of interpreting studies

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The question to be addressed in this chapter is largely answered by the way the editors have chosen to position this contribution within the *Handbook*. Clearly, interpreting studies as a field of research is envisioned as a sub-domain of the broader discipline of translation studies, which is by now reasonably well established, if still subject to dynamic developments. What is at issue, then, is not so much the position of interpreting studies per se but the way it distinguishes its object of study, and its shared ground, or distinctiveness, in terms of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. These will be the focal points of the present chapter.

Even so, what is now largely taken for granted was still a matter of great uncertainty some four decades ago, when translation studies as a discipline could not yet be said to exist, and interpreting constituted an object of research at the interface of a number of disciplines. These roots of the field will be briefly summarized in the following section so that subsequent and modern-day developments, as discussed in the main sections of this chapter, can be appreciated against this historical backdrop.

### Where we come from

One succinct way of identifying the roots of interpreting studies is to say that research on interpreting was initially promoted by psychologists and educators. The very first academic publication, by Jesús Sanz (1930), conjoined these two orientations in a unique manner: Sanz, whose main interest was in school reform in Catalonia, had conducted observations and interviews with conference interpreters in Geneva and subsequently presented his findings at the 1930 Congress of Applied Psychology in Barcelona. Though simultaneous interpreting was already within his purview, research interest in this mode was not rekindled until the 1960s, when a few experimental psychologists (e.g. Oléron and Nanpon 1965; Gerver 1969) carried out their pioneering studies.

The 'educators' in those days were conference interpreters who taught in university-level interpreting schools and sought to pass on their professional expertise to the next generation. Chief among them was Danica Seleskovitch, whose book on conference interpreting ([1968] 1978) could be used to show that the essence of this activity has remained

largely unchanged. However, when interpreting as a profession and an object of research came into its own, the focus was on one particular manifestation, that is, simultaneous interpreting between spoken languages as practised in soundproof booths with electro-acoustic equipment at international conferences. The traditional, 'primitive' mode of interpreting, which has been practised by bilingually proficient persons for thousands of years and is now referred to as short consecutive or liaison interpreting (see Mikkelsen and Viezzi, both this volume) was given little, if any, attention. Not until the final decades of the twentieth century did interpreting in community-based, institutional settings come to the fore.

These shifts regarding the nature of the activity and the object of study have had major implications for the disciplinary sources, theoretical models and methodological approaches of interpreting studies, as described in more detail further on.

To summarize the disciplinary evolution of the field, one must acknowledge in particular the momentum generated by the pioneering work of psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s, giving the field some of its classic models and findings (e.g. Gerver 1976) and, at the same time, spurring the emergence of a research approach *sui generis* as advocated by Seleskovitch in Paris. On the basis of her 'interpretive theory' and transcripts of authentic interpreting recorded in the field, the so-called Paris School harboured the first 'paradigm' of interpreting research, as manifested by the founding in 1974 of a doctoral research programme in interpreting (and translation) studies at the University of Paris.

Subsequent disciplinary developments proved considerably more diverse in terms of theories and methods as well as the make-up of the research community and the phenomena under study. In a search for more scientific rigour, promoted in particular by Daniel Gile (e.g. Gile 1990), the shared concern with cognitive processes in (conference) interpreting was taken up by scholars in various countries, enlisting, where possible, the involvement of scientists in other disciplines. This was epitomized by the collaboration between neurophysiologists and interpreting scholars at the University of Trieste, where psychological experiments were used to elicit findings regarding the cerebral organization of language in the (bilingual) brain. Studies based on the notion of expertise (e.g. Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2000), as well as more text-based, linguistic investigations similarly served to achieve a deeper understanding of the cognitive process of (conference) interpreting. As a result, by the late 1990s an increasingly international community of conference interpreting researchers had emerged (see Diriker, this volume).

Even more diverse is the sub-community of interpreting scholars whose focus is on interpreter-mediated dialogic communication, often in a specific social (institutional) context such as the law, medicine, education and social services. Compared to the cognitive process-oriented (CP) paradigm and its orientation towards the cognitive sciences, the dialogic interaction-oriented paradigm (DI paradigm) has drawn on an even wider panoply of interdisciplinary sources, from language philosophy and anthropology to social theory, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Moreover, interdisciplinarity in this domain is all but built into the object of study, given the way community-based interpreting is embedded in social contexts with their own particular institutional traditions and constraints, from courtroom discourse to police interviewing (see also Fowler *et al.*, this volume) and doctor-patient communication. In all these settings, community interpreting scholars have also taken account of communication in the signed modality, which adds yet another dimension to this variegated domain of study (see Mikkelsen, this volume).

The various developmental pathways that have given rise to interpreting studies as an academic (sub)discipline, or cluster of paradigms, are also reflected in the way interpreting as the shared object of study has been conceptualized and modelled. This makes it



imperative to first understand the concept of interpreting, or rather the way in which interpreting has been understood, before proceeding to a review of the field's theoretical and methodological approaches and, on that basis, considering its relative position in the concert of scientific disciplines.

## How we think about interpreting

Interpreting can be described most broadly as a type of communication in which someone says what another person has said in another language. As will be seen in the following review, this basic definition has been elaborated on along various lines, yielding increasingly specific ways of thinking about (conceptualizing), and studying, interpreting.

### Definitions

Rather than a unique activity and phenomenon *sui generis*, interpreting has been viewed more often than not as a particular manifestation of human efforts to enable communication across languages and cultures, that is, of translation in the wider sense, defined, for instance, by Brislin (1976: 1) as 'the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form ... or whether one or both languages are based on signs'. The choice of viewing interpreting as a form of translational activity in general shifts the basic problem of definition to the task of specifying the boundaries between interpreting and other forms of translation. If no such boundaries could be identified, then interpreting would not exist as a unique concept and object of study. The way such boundaries are drawn clearly shapes the nature of the field of study.

The most commonly used distinguishing feature that has been applied to this task is the language modality (spoken vs. written), leading to the characterization of interpreting as 'oral translation'. However, this common definition fails to account for the use of signed languages, as mentioned in the quotation from Brislin above. This problem is resolved by focusing not on language modality but on temporal constraints, as proposed by Kade (1968). His definition of interpreting as a form of translational activity in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language accommodates both signed-language interpreting and cross-modal variants such as sight translation and live interlingual subtitling.

The proposal to see interpreting as a form of translation, in the broader sense, is an act of theorizing, if at a very fundamental level. As suggested by Chesterman (2009), it is an 'interpretive hypothesis' that claims that something can be usefully seen as something else. In a similar vein, further interpretive hypotheses can be formulated for interpreting, and complemented by descriptive hypotheses, ultimately leading to representations of the object in the form of models.

### Conceptions

In their attempt to gain a better understanding of their object, interpreting scholars have proposed a number of ways in which interpreting might best be seen. In early publications, in the 1950s and 1960s, a concern with language was prominent, and interpreting, like translation, was seen as a process in which words and structures in one language were converted into corresponding words and structures in another. This view of interpreting as

essentially a linguistic transfer process can be gleaned, for instance, from Glémet's (1958) early description of simultaneous interpreting, according to which the interpreter takes 'a leap in the dark ... in a syntactic maze', while 'engaged in the task of word-translation'. Early psycholinguistic experiments, too, investigated the (simultaneous) interpreter's time lag as a function of grammatical constituents, and interpreting from German was identified as a special challenge on account of the sentence-final position of the verb.

An alternative view of the interpreting process that tended to play down differences in linguistic structure was promoted in particular by Seleskovitch. Central to her account, in particular of consecutive interpreting, was the cognitive construct of 'sense', which was said to be formed by integrating fresh perception with prior knowledge. While the two conceptions of the interpreting process – linguistic transfer vs. making sense – have evidently been shaped by the mode of interpreting under study, these two ideas apply to interpreting as a whole. What sets them apart is the degree to which the interpreting process is seen as language-pair-specific. Whereas the focus on (presumably 'language-free') sense renders a concern with linguistic constraints largely irrelevant, the verbal-transfer view would highlight the contrastive differences in a given language pair as a relevant focus of study.

Another influential conception of interpreting was developed from a psychological perspective, particularly in the work of Gerver, who characterized interpreting as 'a complex form of human information processing involving the perception, storage, retrieval, transformation and transmission of verbal information' (Gerver 1976: 167). This information-processing view of interpreting, which capitalizes on advances in cognitive science, represents a separate theoretical and disciplinary perspective from that of the Paris School, but shares with it a concern with the cognitive process. Both Gerver and Seleskovitch – to mention the leading representatives of the two schools of thought – aspired to give a psychological account of interpreting; where they differed was in the choice of disciplinary framework and methodology.

Yet another theoretical framework for the study of interpreting emerged from what was then, in the late 1980s, the budding field of translation studies, which had in turn received a boost from a more communication-oriented approach to the study of text and discourse. The focus of interest shifted from the conversion of a source text, implying linguistic or psycholinguistic procedures, to the target text and its features and functions. Interpreting was thus viewed as a goal-oriented, text-production activity largely constrained by the communicative situation and sociocultural context.

As suggested by the distinction between 'text' and 'discourse', the conception of interpreting as a text/discourse production activity gave rise to two separate strands of development that were again shaped by the mode of interpreting under study. With more and more attention devoted to interpreting in dialogic interactions, the focus shifted from the 'text' as a rather static entity to discourse as a dynamic process. Insights drawn from sociolinguistics (e.g. Gumperz, Hymes) and sociology (Goffman) served to underpin new analytical approaches, all of which centred on the notion of discourse and the interpreter's role in relaying and managing it, as epitomized by the work of Wadensjö (1998). The concept of mediation, which is a deeply rooted semantic constituent of interpreting, proved closely related and relevant to the view of interpreting as a discourse management process and was used to highlight the interpreter's position 'in between' languages, cultures, ideologies and power structures.

Without doubt, none of the different conceptions of interpreting – as a verbal transfer, a sense-making process, a cognitive processing skill, a text/discourse production activity and as mediation – exist as exclusive points of view; rather, interpreting has many facets, and various scholars have chosen, often in response to the mode or type of interpreting



under study, to foreground one aspect of it or another. This is no less true of the various models of interpreting that have been proposed to describe and explain the phenomenon.

### Models

Interpreting scholars have devised a variety of models to capture what they regard as essential features of the phenomenon. Some of these may aspire to the status of a 'theory', but most models of interpreting are of a descriptive nature, highlighting significant components and relationships with little claim to predictive power.

Given the radically different viewpoints presented above, it would be unrealistic to hope for an all-encompassing model of interpreting. Rather, a number of dimensions, or levels, of modelling can be discerned. These range from an account of interpreting (and interpreters) in the history of human civilization – in such fields as diplomacy, trade, conquest and missionary work – and the status of the interpreting profession in a given society, to the focus on discourse in interpreter-mediated interactions in a given institutional context, and on the cognitive and neurolinguistic processes underlying the communicative practice. While a detailed review of models is beyond the scope of this essay (see Pöchhacker 2004: Chapter 5), a few examples can serve to illustrate the breadth of modelling efforts to date.

In a broadly historical dimension, Cronin (2002) has posited two alternative systems of interpreter provision, identified as autonomous vs. heteronomous. In the latter, recourse is taken to presumably proficient members of the linguistic and cultural group with which one wishes to communicate, whereas autonomous provision implies more direct control by the commissioning party or power; examples include imperial authorities training and retaining their own presumably loyal subjects to serve as interpreters. The fact that throughout history there have been shifts from heteronomous to autonomous interpreter provision highlights the issues of loyalty, trust and assured proficiency that are central to the position and status of interpreters.

In a more contemporary sociological approach, Inghilleri (2005) models the habitus of interpreters in UK asylum proceedings within a Bourdieusian framework, locating interpreters in 'zones of uncertainty' in complying with fluid translational norms. By the same token, the recognition of interpreting as a professional occupation, or the lack thereof, has been analysed in models of the professionalization process for various countries and domains (e.g. Tseng 1992). Such models of interpreting reflect the principal stakeholders (e.g. training institutions, professional bodies, legislative authorities) and the various mechanisms for influencing the occupation's professional status and autonomy.

Efforts to model interpreting at the socioprofessional and institutional levels, however, are relatively rare. Most authors have chosen to foreground the micro-social process of interaction and, even more so, the cognitive processes involved in the task.

Interaction models, in their most basic form, seek to reflect the constellation of interactants and the communicative relationships between them. Where the focus is on dialogue interpreting, this usually yields a tripartite, or triadic, arrangement (e.g. Anderson 1976: 211), whereas accounts of interaction in conference-like settings would include speakers and listeners in the source and target languages as well as the interpreter, other team members and the client (e.g. Gile 1991: 189). In either case, the constellation models can be enriched by specifying, for instance, the contextual roles, sociocultural backgrounds and intentional orientations of the various agents (e.g. Pöchhacker 2005: 689).

In a more fine-grained analysis of interpreters' discourse management, Wadensjö (1998) used Goffman's notion of the participation framework to propose different kinds of

listenership for an interpreter (reporter, recapitulator, responder), combined with Goffman's notion of 'footing', that is, a speaker's choices for aligning with a given utterance – in the speaker roles of animator, author and principal. Other modelling efforts have sought to account more comprehensively for contextual and situational variables, for instance by characterizing the nature of the interaction by such criteria as the degree of social distance, formality, equality or shared goals (e.g. Alexieva 1997).

Another set of interaction models can be identified by their focus on communication, that is, the use of language in interpersonal interaction. Some of these, in the 1960s and 1970s, were inspired by the information-theoretical model of communication, with encoding and decoding and transmission via a noise-prone channel. As a more cognitive conception of language use emerged in the 1970s, the emphasis shifted towards text-based (or discourse-based) comprehension and production processes, often including also the dimensions of contextual and sociocultural background knowledge (e.g. Stenzl 1983; Kohn and Kalina 1996). With communicative interaction thus conceived as a dynamic, cognitively based process, these models of interpreting could also be classified as processing models. The latter, however, typically foreground mental operations rather than texts or human agents in their situational environment.

One of the most basic – and at the same time most powerful – processing models of interpreting is that of the *théorie du sens* (Seleskovitch [1968] 1978), which posits 'deverbalized sense' as the pinnacle of a triangular process leading from one language to another. Rather than direct verbal 'transcoding' (between languages), interpreting proper, according to this model, or theory, has a cognitive foundation and requires the interpreter to grasp a speaker's intended message (*vouloir dire*) before re-expressing it in another language.

This core model of the interpreting (and translation) process, which is now largely regarded as axiomatic, has been elaborated on by various authors, mainly on the basis of psycholinguistic and psychological insights into the processes of language comprehension and production. Among the latest and most comprehensive of such models is that by Setton (1999), who draws on the state of the art in language processing and mental models for a cognitive pragmatic account centred on the notions of context and relevance. Like in earlier models that envisage a series of processing steps and procedures (e.g. Moser 1978), the phenomenon of interest here is simultaneous interpreting, even though the principal stages of reception and production would apply also to the consecutive mode.

Distinctly mode-specific processing models were proposed in particular by Gile (1997), whose Effort Models focus on the concurrency and coordination of receptive, productive and short-term memory operations within the limits of available 'processing capacity', or attentional resources. In line with Gerver's (1976) original idea of a 'fixed-capacity central processor', the activity of which can be distributed over several tasks, these multiple-task models can draw support from recent advances in research on working memory, as reflected in the experimental study by Liu *et al.* (2004).

The list of models reviewed above is by no means complete, but it should serve to illustrate the diversity of perspectives and focal points in coming to a richer understanding of the phenomenon. What is of special interest in the present context is the degree to which models of interpreting are distinct from, or similar to those proposed for other forms of translational activity. While such common ground has not been previously explored, it is easy to see how some of the models designed for interpreting could also be applied to translation. Cronin's (2002) notion of autonomous vs. heteronomous provision, for instance, should be of particular interest when it comes to translating into or out of languages of limited diffusion; likewise, Tseng's (1992) professionalization model could equally account



for the socioprofessional status of translators in a given domain, and Gile's (1991) account of participants in the overall communication process was conceived as a generic model to begin with. At the level of interaction, an example of particular interest is the model by Kirchhoff (1976), who used a scheme developed by Reiß for translation and adapted it to interpreting, retaining the assumption of two separate situational and sociocultural contexts (of source and target languages) that is typical of written translation. In a similar vein, Stenzl (1983) adapted translation-theoretical models that foregrounded texts, socio-cultural background knowledge, communicative intentions and functions, with little need for unique or interpreting-specific components.

In contrast to models reflecting the conceptual proximity of interpreting and translation, mainly at the socioprofessional, institutional and textual levels, cognitive processing models and accounts of the micro-process of interaction tend to be more clearly tailored to interpreting. Leaving aside Seleskovitch's (1962) triangular vision of the sense-based translation process, such models would centre on the co-presence and simultaneity of participants and processes in real time, which is after all the defining feature of interpreting as a form of translational activity. Examples include Gile's Effort Models (e.g. Gile 1997), the models by Feldweg (1996), designed in a communication-theoretical framework, and the innovative attempt by Fernando Poyatos (1987) to model the production and reception of communicative signals, both verbal and non-verbal, in different modes of interpreting.

On the whole, models of interpreting can be said to reflect both the uniqueness of interpreting as a cognitive and interactive process in real time, and the common ground shared by interpreting with other forms of translational activity. Thus, not all, but some models of interpreting can claim to be specific to the phenomenon and bring out its distinctive features.

### Theories?

What has been observed about models of interpreting (vs. translation) also relates to the fundamental question of whether there is a theory of interpreting distinct from theories of translation – surely a fundamental issue when reflecting on the position of interpreting studies.

Complicating this issue, to say the least, is the fraught relationship between models and theories, and it would be impossible here to do justice to the relevant debate in the philosophy of science. Assuming that models are preliminary theories (rather than complementary to or independent of theories), one can conclude from what has been said above that there is a considerable degree of synergy between models of interpreting and of translation. What, then, about theories, viewed as a set of true statements about the phenomenon to be understood and explained? Is there a theory of interpreting, or a set of distinct theories of interpreting?

The classic proposition by Seleskovitch (1962), that interpreting does not consist in transferring words but in grasping and re-expressing non-linguistic sense, was indeed formulated as a theory of interpreting and would be acknowledged as such by most scholars in the field. Over the decades, however, the *théorie du sens* came to be more appropriately understood as a general theory of translation (in the wider sense) rather than as a theoretical account unique to interpreting. Conversely, general theories of translation that had originally been conceived with an eye to the written modality – such as Toury's translational laws or Vermeer's skopos theory – were tested for and applied to interpreting (e.g. Pöchhacker 1995; Shlesinger 1989), yielding theoretical insights into interpreting that are

actually derived from theories of translation in general. More recently, the search for universals of translation, such as explicitation, has been extended to interpreting, taking advantage of corpus-linguistic approaches.

As pointed out in connection with models, the search for an interpreting-specific theory is most promising for analytical efforts foregrounding interactional co-presence and cognitive simultaneity. In the former case, Wadensjö's (1998) use of concepts from interactional sociolinguistics has yielded the basic insight that interpreters perform not only discourse relaying functions but also discourse management, adopting various speaker roles in the process. In the cognitive realm scholars applying theories of working memory developed in the cognitive sciences (e.g. Liu *et al.* 2004) have concluded that interpreting, especially in the simultaneous mode, consists in the appropriate management of attentional resources, coordinating and balancing the demands of receptive, productive and storage processes. These efforts to theorize interpreting are therefore of an applied nature, drawing on theories of interpersonal discourse-based interaction and theories of cognitive multitasking, respectively. In either case the main challenge lies in further developing basic theoretical insights by testing deductively derived hypotheses against sets of empirical data. Indeed, the central concern of interpreting scholars seems to have been not the development of abstract theories but the collection and analysis of empirical data for more specific descriptive and explanatory purposes. This makes methodology a key domain in which the specific nature of interpreting research within translation studies needs to be explored.

### How we study interpreting

As with models and related theoretical approaches, the type of interpreting under study has largely shaped the methods used by interpreting scholars in empirical research. Generally speaking, simultaneous conference interpreting in spoken languages has been investigated in particular on the basis of experiments, whereas dialogue interpreting in institutional settings has been associated with observational research. This has been linked to different research topics – cognitive processes in the former case, and interpreters' behaviour in real-life settings, in the latter. However, the array of methodological approaches used in interpreting studies has become impressively broad and goes far beyond the basic distinction between experimental and observational studies (cf. Gile 1998).

Ever since the 1960s, experiments involving interpreting or related complex tasks such as shadowing have been conducted to test the effect of different input variables on the (simultaneous) interpreting process and its output. The studies by Gerver (1976) on the impact of source-speech rate, noise and intonation are a case in point. Using professional interpreters (or students) as subjects, these designs typically involve the manipulation of the input variable of interest in a controlled interpreting task, and output measurements relating to some aspect of professional performance, such as accuracy or completeness. As acknowledged already by Gerver (*ibid.*), this kind of experimental design suffers from several weaknesses, including the lack of available subjects in a given language combination and the challenge of quantitative performance assessment as the dependent variable. In addition, there is the problem of individual variability in small groups of subjects, and the concern that experiments outside of an authentic communicative context risk losing the very essence of the task, though this can be ameliorated by appropriate simulation (e.g. Ahrens 2005). At any rate, it has proved difficult for interpreting researchers to engage in controlled experimentation for hypothesis testing using inferential statistics, prompting some to turn to 'softer' methods involving qualitative data, such as interpreter subjects'



post-task verbalization. Interestingly, the use of so-called retrospective protocols seems to have been inspired by translation research based on think-aloud protocols, or TAPs, and a number of studies involving some form of post-task recall have been carried out.

A similar extension of methods first used by translation researchers can be observed for corpus-linguistic methods. Thanks to the availability of large quantities of recordings, not least from the European Parliament, and the use of software-assisted transcription, questions of modality, strategy and style in interpreting have come to be investigated in relatively large machine-readable corpora (e.g. Shlesinger and Malkiel 2005; Russo *et al.* 2006). Needless to say, such quantitative analyses are founded on the calculated neglect of situational and contextual variables, despite attempts at documenting as many of these as possible. Massive corpora will indeed eliminate the effects of some contextual constraints, but the failure to fully account for prosodic features, which are particularly laborious to transcribe and document, remains problematic and places the focus of corpus-linguistic interpreting studies on verbal features rather than the paralinguistic components that are unique to the interpreter's spontaneous production.

In contrast, studies using smaller, manually analysed corpora have typically been presented as case studies (e.g. Diriker 2004), showing what may occur rather than aspiring to claims of quantitative significance or representativeness. This approach is commonly taken in studies of dialogue interpreting, where the relationship between textual data and interactional dynamics is considered to be so close that the former cannot be explained without consideration of the latter. Whether in legal, health care or social service settings, studies of interpreter-mediated encounters therefore rely on ethnographic data as well as on recordings of what has been uttered. This amounts to a fieldwork approach that can be seen as the opposite end of the methodological spectrum vis-à-vis controlled experimentation in the laboratory.

Over and above the distinction between fieldwork, usually in the form of case studies, and experiments is the use of surveys to collect data from larger numbers of data sources. This strategy has been employed especially for the study of professional issues, and across occupational domains. In spoken-language conference interpreting, AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, has been the target population of studies on such topics as working conditions and stress, quality and role perceptions, with web-based questionnaires emerging as a valuable tool for survey research among interpreters (Pöchhacker 2009).

Most of the research approaches mentioned so far have placed the focus on interpreters or their products and performance. An alternative vantage point is that of the user of interpreting services. Here again, the use of survey techniques – in the form of self-administered questionnaires (e.g. Kurz 1993; Mesa 2000) or interviews (e.g. Moser 1996) – is prominent, but there is also a significant line of experimental research to canvass user judgements and responses. The work of Collados Ais (1998) on user expectations vs. quality judgements, is particularly noteworthy for the field of simultaneous conference interpreting, whereas Hale's (2004) matched-guise experiments on the perception of interpreted witness testimony are a good example of such work in the legal domain. Going one step further, such experiments have been conducted, especially among users of signed-language interpreters, not only to elicit judgements but also to test the cognitive effectiveness of the interpreter's performance for the target-language receivers. The study by Napier *et al.* (2009) on the comprehensibility of judicial instructions for deaf jurors, is a particularly consequential piece of research along these lines.

The present sketch of methodological approaches in interpreting studies is not intended as an exhaustive overview, either of specific research techniques or of relevant examples.

Its purpose, rather, is to highlight overall trends and focal points so as to reflect on the degree to which interpreting researchers are unique in their endeavours, particularly in relation to scholars studying other forms of translational activity. On balance, the uniqueness of interpreting studies with regard to its methodology appears rather limited, at least regarding the present state of the art.

Over the half-century or so that research on interpreting has been carried out with some consistency, there have certainly been fundamental differences and opposite trends. In the 1960s, when interpreting researchers were engaged in using experimentally generated corpora of interpreted output to measure temporal variables such as pauses and input rate, translation scholars were busy discussing questions of equivalence by looking at linguistic (verbal, textual) data, and the two approaches – from psycholinguistics and (text) linguistics, respectively – suggested little, if any, shared ground. By the 1980s and 1990s, however, translation scholars had moved into process research (e.g. using TAPs) while interpreting researchers had begun to study the interpreter's output as a textual product. This movement in opposite directions resulted in a greatly increased area of interface and common ground. Indeed, few methodological approaches have remained an exclusive domain of interpreting researchers. This even applies to neurolinguistic studies on the cerebral lateralization of languages in interpreters and other bilinguals that would have seemed at such a remove from translation studies in the late 1980s. Recent neurolinguistic experiments using imaging techniques such as PET (positron emission tomography) or fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) have been designed with (visual) translation tasks as much as with interpreting, not least in order to avoid the artefacts created by speech production.

In all, the few methods reserved exclusively for interpreting scholars seem to be laboratory experiments targeting (simultaneous) interpreters' working memory and real-time processing skills, on the one hand, and discourse-analytical studies of interpreter-mediated interactions in real-life (institutional) settings, on the other. The fact that these two approaches are central to two major paradigms in interpreting studies, however, does suggest that the subdiscipline has a methodological core area of its own despite significant convergence in theory and method within translation studies.

## Where we stand – and where we are headed

In endeavouring to situate the discipline of interpreting studies within the wider field of translation studies and explore its shared ground and unique territory, the discussion so far has been of a binary nature, relating research on interpreting on the one hand to translation research on the other. This is of course an undue simplification, and it should be pointed out that interpreting has some interesting overlaps with other subdomains that can in turn be differentiated from the rest of the discipline. A particularly relevant example is audiovisual translation, which includes broadcast interpreting and respeaking-based subtitling, both intra- and interlingual, as relevant modes of language transfer. In this sense, research on interpreting is part of the subdiscipline known as audiovisual translation studies (see Gambier, this volume). Another significant area of study that includes interpreting and is rather clearly delineated against the rest of the discipline is machine translation (MT). Speech-to-speech translation has made some significant progress, and where the focus is on the verbal component, there is little difference between MT systems dealing with written or spoken language. Moreover, research into translational activity in history also includes interpreting (e.g. Deslisle and Woodworth 1995), and except for Bible translation or the translation of literary texts, the two may have been more closely



intertwined than in our modern age, vindicating Schleiermacher's dictum that interpreting is any translational activity that has to do with transacting some business.

Mention should also be made of hybrid phenomena that may come under the heading of translation as well as interpreting. Sight translation, as its name suggests, has to do with written texts but involves cognitive processes that are more akin to interpreting. Likewise, respoking for speech recognition-based subtitling involves a set of skills that is also required for interpreting, as does the written real-time translation of online chats. Such areas of overlap are likely to foster cooperation between specialists in translation and in interpreting, healthily blurring the boundaries between various subdomains.

With this acknowledgement that the substructure of translation studies – and the position of interpreting studies within it – is much less rigidly defined than labels such as interpreting studies or audiovisual translation studies may suggest, I shall now attempt to summarize where we, as interpreting scholars, stand and where we may be headed.

As indicated in the discussion of models and theories, the field of interpreting studies has come to enter into an ever-closer union with translation research in general (see also Schäffner 2004). From the ultimately shared interest in cognitive process-oriented research to corpus-linguistic analyses based on large machine-readable corpora to the sociological focus on the agent, similar models and methods have been employed to study translation and interpreting alike. This growing synergy of theoretical and methodological approaches notwithstanding, some of the shared topics, such as power, ethics and the role of technology, manifest themselves in interpreting in specific ways. Whereas information and communication technologies, for instance, have undoubtedly revolutionized translation practices, the phenomenon of remote interpreting, in different modes, modalities and settings, constitutes a unique object of study and is likely to become a defining theme of interpreting research that is unlike any other in translation studies. By the same token the sociocultural impact of translational activity is of a fundamentally different nature in interpreting than in translation. Interpreters, with the exception of those working in the mass media, are clearly more limited in their reach. Unlike translators of written texts, theirs is a local, on-site role in shaping social processes such as legal proceedings, police actions, healthcare and educational services. Again, this makes real-time interaction a focal point of investigation, while the impact of interpreting activities at a broader societal level remains more difficult to trace.

In terms of social impact, research into translation and interpreting should ultimately help us to understand the role of translational activity in social and cultural processes. For the interdisciplinary study of such phenomena as postcolonial power shifts, globalization and mechanisms of cultural production, there has been talk of a translation turn in a number of relevant disciplines. Maybe, though at a more limited social scale, one might envisage an 'interpreting turn' in the study of social processes within increasingly multicultural societies – that is, a keener awareness and theoretical treatment of the role of interpreter mediation in the key arenas of institutional interaction.

## Related topics

research paradigms, methods, models, conference interpreting, dialogue interpreting

## Further reading

Garzone, Giuliana and Viezzi, Maurizio (eds) (2002) *Interpreting in the 21st Century*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. (A collection of research papers presented at the international

conference in Forlì in 2000 that aptly illustrates the breadth of interpreting studies at the turn of the millennium.)

Pöchhacker, Franz (2004) *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, London and New York: Routledge. (A textbook providing an overview of the development and state of the art of interpreting studies as a discipline.)

Pöchhacker, Franz and Shlesinger, Miriam (eds) (2002) *The Interpreting Studies Reader*, London and New York: Routledge. (A collection of some two dozen seminal papers reflecting the development of interpreting studies and some of its major themes.)

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## Part II

# Defining the object of research in translation studies

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