

Preface

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Why Translation Studies Matters

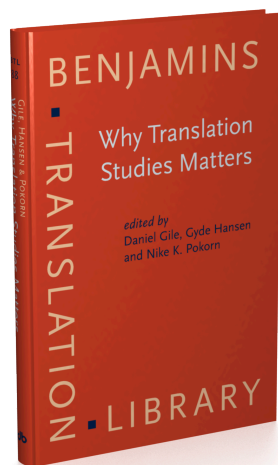
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Preface

This volume is a collection of papers around the theme “Why Translation Studies matters”. Some authors address the topic explicitly and point to contributions to training, to translation practice, to society at large, to other disciplines. Others prefer to focus on particular aspects of Translation, Translator training or Translation Studies, leaving it to the readers to identify the contribution of TS on the basis of the studies presented.

The first paper, by Franz Pöchhacker, is one of the few which focus on the theme from a wide, comprehensive angle. It refers explicitly to Interpreting Studies, but applies equally well to Translation Studies as a whole. Pöchhacker argues that the existence of a separate body devoted to Interpreting Studies meets an epistemological need. He defines the “market” for IS, starting with interpreter training, moving on to the IS community and to practitioners of interpreting. He highlights the potential importance of IS to the community interpreting environment and suggests that interpreting scholars could help make IS more meaningful by stressing ‘development’, *inter alia* by participating in interdisciplinary committees which could improve the working environment of interpreters. This idea is also taken up by Kaisa Koskinen, who also expresses her opinions on the desirable contribution of TS. Her paper is an example of interdisciplinary import: she refers to ideas from sociologist Michael Burawoy, who divided sociology into a two-by-two matrix showing the four possible combinations of types of audience (“academic” vs. “non-academic”) and knowledge (“instrumental” vs. “reflexive”). She takes this matrix as a source of inspiration for her own reflection, explains that Translation scholars have not addressed sufficiently the non-academic audience and joins Pöchhacker in calling for direct, active engagement of TS in society.

While such active intervention may help TS matter more, by essence, scholarly activity is primarily about exploring. Various papers in this collective volume explore the role and position of Translation in society. Here, TS attempts to discuss and reveal the underlying hegemonic structures that find their expression in a particular translation practice, and thus provides an insight into the position of the translator, translation or particular genres in the observed society.

In his contribution, David Limon says that translators are increasingly referred to as “cultural mediators” – which implies an active intervention in the communication process beyond the conduit model – but finds that in the field, they do not necessarily play such a role. He illustrates this with the example of translations of texts about Karst, a type of limestone which plays a role in the natural heritage of Slovenia. He finds that in English translations of such texts there is no cultural explicitation. Limon speculates

about the reasons and suggests *inter alia* that raising the translators' status would help empower them to intervene more actively as cultural mediators in their work.

Carmen Camus Camus looks at another aspect of social constraints on translation, in this case censorship in Spain during Franco's period. She examines the censorship files regarding Western narrative texts, which were very popular in Spain during that period, including both translations and pseudo-translations, and provides information on publications during various phases of Franco's regime, including the 1946 Book promotion law and the subsequent economic incentives given by the Spanish government to the publication of Western narratives. She concludes with examples of censorship on texts which she analyzes.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Nike K. Pokorn analyzes the influence of self-censorship in a Socialist country. Her research covers the translation of children's literature in Slovenia from 1945 to 1963. The case study presented in her paper focuses on Felix Salten's *Bambi*. The one aspect she chooses to highlight here is self-triggered attenuation of religious overtones in the translation of the last passages of the story, which, she argues, is found throughout translations of juvenile literature and reflects the attitude of communism towards the Judeo-Christian paradigm at the time.

Another type of literature, namely crime fiction, is studied by Yvonne Lindqvist, with a literary polysystem-oriented analysis and a comparison of British, Swedish and French translations of José Carlos Somoza's *La caverna de las ideas*. Lindqvist says that the English translation was the most manipulated of the three, and that this is due to differences in the position of translated texts within the three literary systems, the English system being more closed and requiring more information in the translation. She concludes that studies with both micro-level and macro-level components could help gain more insight into the translator's habitus.

Hanna Risku, Angela Dickinson and Richard Pircher's paper takes a more economic view of the role of translation in society in terms of knowledge production and sharing as an economic asset. They discuss approaches to Knowledge Management and then go on to present translators as knowledge experts who generate intellectual capital and are good communicators. They look at KM instruments for codifiable and non-codifiable aspects of knowledge required for translation. They conclude that both translation and Translation Studies are relevant to companies as producers and sharers of intellectual capital which can add value to their organizations' production, but that they are also relevant to society at large, *inter alia* in terms of intercultural communication.

Translation is about knowledge, but obviously also about language. TS can help reveal the forces that shape different language policies, the position of particular languages in given societies as well as linguistic change. Several contributions in this volume focus on language issues, starting with Mary Snell-Hornby's paper on globalization and English. While the existence of a *lingua franca* can be seen as a positive factor which facilitates communication, Snell-Hornby highlights limitations and drawbacks in the increasing use of less-than-perfect English for academic exchanges worldwide.

Listeners sometimes find it difficult to follow non-native speakers taking the floor in English, and scholars with no English have no chance to participate in many debates. Snell-Hornby proposes that no single natural language should monopolize global communication in TS and is in favour of passive knowledge (understanding, as opposed to producing) of several languages, as well as the use of bridge languages for better communication.

The concept of bridge languages is precisely the focus of Martina Vankúšová's contribution, which addresses the specific case of translation and interpreting for the European Union where a large percentage of translations are done from Euro-English into other languages – but problems may arise with occasional use of non-English. Bridge-languages could help individuals communicate with speakers of other related languages. While there are solutions for Romance languages (French) and for Germanic languages (English), the situation is more difficult for Slavonic languages. Russian is considered unsuitable, if only because of its use of the Cyrillic script. Slovakian and Slovenian are other possibilities.

Hebrew is the main language in Israel. It is understood and used actively by all, but strong minority languages which the mass media use include Arabic and Russian. On the other hand, English has also permeated strongly Israeli society. This intense interpenetration of several linguistic systems in a small population raises interesting questions for sociolinguists with respect to national identity and the integration of minorities. Rachel Weissbrod argues that Translation Studies could benefit from closer scrutiny of phenomena around multilingualism in the media, and suggests that, conversely, TS can provide insights into the construction of social identity in a multicultural society.

Moving from language and society to language in translation, Marija Zlatnar Moe studies language shifts in the translation of popular fiction texts into Slovene. In her sample of translations of seven books from different genres, she finds a general trend towards a more neutral, unmarked formal register which does not reflect the style of the original. She argues that this can make a well-written book uninteresting and disappointing to readers who do not have access to the source language. By highlighting such phenomena, TS could help make society at large aware of the risks associated with poor translation. Beyond awareness-raising, it could look at the reasons behind the losses and perhaps help find some remedies, especially in translator training.

Ian Williams proposes a corpus-based approach and methodology to look at linguistic profiles of texts. When comparing such texts in source- and target languages, regular but subtle differences in collocation, colligation, semantic and semantic prosody preferences which can well go unnoticed in traditional human observation can be identified and quantified, and thus provide input for possible improvement of translation. The method, called Application of Corpus-based Contrastive Evaluation for Natural Translation (ACCENT), is illustrated by a comparison of the use of the first person verb use in English and Spanish biomedical research papers.

A paper with direct applications for translator training is offered by Dieter Hermann Schmitz, who looks at the problem of translating names of organizations. More specifically, he reflects on his daily practice as a translator trainer involved in the translation of Finnish radio broadcasts at his university in Tampere into German. Taking the name of a Finnish industrial association as a starting point, he shows that literal translation of such names may not be a good solution, discusses possible options and formulates general strategies for the translation of names.

Training and translation assessment are the focus of the following section of the book. Heloísa Pezza Cintrão discusses the role of theory in translator training. She offers data from a case study where concepts from functional theory, from text linguistics and from cognitive research into inferencing processes and problem-solving were presented to students at an introductory class. A controlled experiment was designed to test the effect of such awareness-raising through theoretical concepts on actual translation performance. Findings suggest that presenting declarative knowledge about translation-related theoretical elements does contribute to the students' progress, and rather rapidly at that.

Introducing theoretical concepts is one potential way to accelerate learning. Another is a short internship-like experience. Magdalena Bartłomiejczyk reports on the results of such an operation, organized for her conference interpreting students. Students interpreted simultaneously at a real conference in silent booths (no output was available to delegates) for a total number of hours roughly equivalent to a term and a half in the booth at their university. A before-after experiment done on a set of two English speeches to be interpreted into Polish assessed the actual effect in terms of propositional accuracy gains ("fidelity") and in terms of autonomous output quality. The findings serve as input for further improvement of the training programme.

Kerstin Kunz, Sara Castagnoli and Natalie Kübler describe an e-learning course on the use of corpora for translation targeting both professional translators and trainees, which is designed to give vocational training in the application of new technologies such as Translation Memories, Markup Languages, Machine Translation and Corpora which span activities going from traditional translation to localization, terminology management, information management and project management. This course was developed by the EU-funded MELLANGE project which, according to the authors, fills a gap associated with the lack of awareness by translators of corpora and associated technologies.

From within the ranks of Translation Studies, it has often been claimed that investigating translation-related phenomena has something to offer to other disciplines which address language and communication problems. Psychology and more specifically psycholinguistics has been interested in the cognitive development of bilinguals. Caroline Lehr reports on a study in which linguists submit translation students to a German and French lexical decision task, the purpose being to investigate linguistic data processing in bilinguals. She elaborates on further prospects for the extension of interdisciplinary cooperation between psychology and Translation Studies.

Agnieszka Chmiel follows a similar line, starting with the import of concepts and theories from cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, more specifically ideas about the mental lexicon and about memory. While Lehr refers to the contribution translators can make to psycholinguists, Chmiel focuses on interpreting. She introduces her longitudinal project aimed at developing effective aptitude tests for interpreter training programs on the basis of cognitive factors. She reports on two pilot studies, one on the processing of cognates and the other on semantic verbal fluency, and suggests that further studies might put to good use potential synergy between Interpreting Studies and psycholinguistics.

Barbara Ahrens, Eliza Kalderon, Christoph Krick and Wolfgang Reith are engaged in neurophysiological studies of the human brain using functional magnetic resonance imaging. Again, they are interested in the particular bilingualism of conference interpreters which they compare to foreign language students and to students who have little contact with foreign languages, and examine activation patterns in the brain during language switching operations in the three groups. In the study reported here, they looked at the applicability of fMRI in studying the relative activity of various parts of the brain during simultaneous interpreting vs. free speech production. They view their findings as a suitable starting point for further exploration about the evolution of brain activity and structures over the interpreters' career.

The last paper in this volume takes a deliberately conservative view but offers an optimistic conclusion. Daniel Gile challenges the idea that TS takes no interest in the practitioners' needs. He concedes that its "scientific" contribution to the practice of Translation is difficult to measure – one might note in this respect that most contributions about the scientific effects of TS included in this volume relate to prospects rather than to achievements, but argues that its contribution to Translator training is already felt in the field. The paper ends with a comment: some authors may argue that TS is an epistemological requirement for translators and interpreters and helps address various aspects of society, of language, of translator training, of cognitive processes, but perhaps the community of practitioners could be reminded that TS as an academic discipline also has a role to play in defending and sometimes raising the Translators' social status.

The editors