

# Introduction

## Routes into translation studies: the journey through a discipline

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This story of Babel recounts, among other things, the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity as impossibility.

(Derrida 1985: 8)

Lecturers, practitioners and researchers of translation phenomena have to deal, on a daily basis, with the relationship between theory, research methodologies and specialized practice. In fact, we began debating the nature of these connections nearly 20 years ago, when we were both teaching and researching at the University of Birmingham in the UK. Since then, translation studies has developed into an unquestioned academic discipline, with established departments, journals, associations, conferences and doctoral programmes. The journey to institutionalization, however, has not been easy and it is by no means finished, as José Lambert points out in the prelude to this *Handbook*. Similarly there are many other journeys on which to embark when joining this discipline. The territory, however, is quite complex and not always friendly to the uninitiated.

This *Handbook* intends to be like a torchlight which will lead newcomers into the complex array of themes and approaches that currently characterize translation studies. It will provide safe access routes into key areas of the discipline, highlighting not only what is available but also how it is done. From the periphery of academia, the discipline has been growing and spiralling outwards, just like the designs on our front cover, reaching out to other disciplines in order to fulfil its potential, a potential that is marked by the inevitability of interdisciplinarity and globalization. New researchers coming into the field and even more experienced ones looking for a new perspective will find this *Handbook* useful and highly informative.

This *Handbook* is, therefore, addressed to everyone interested in both research and translation studies. It offers an historical and a synchronic narrative route into the key areas and practices. Written by 41 of the world's leading scholars, it revisits the institutional trajectory of translation studies, reviews main theoretical frameworks and methodologies and specialized practices, as well as considering the challenges that may lie ahead.

We have been very privileged to be able to have José Lambert as one of our contributors. His chapter ‘The institutionalization of the discipline’ opens this volume with a detailed and highly critical account of the institutionalization of translation studies as we know it today. As a first-hand protagonist, this is the best introduction possible to a volume of this type and sets the tone for Part I. The remaining chapters are organized into five main sections, which represent our main access points into the discipline, cutting through the myriad theories and themes available. The focus is on both theoretical and methodological issues, providing numerous examples and a critical overview of the challenges ahead. A list of commented further reading is provided at the end of each chapter to encourage further study of the topics.

### **Part I: Translation studies as an academic discipline**

Our point of departure, and our first journey into the discipline, is an exploration of translation studies as a discipline, as a research field, from its origins to the present and the future. It was important to us to start this journey looking ‘inwards’ – who we are, where we have been, where we are, and where we are heading. Kirsten Malmkjær opens this first section with an indispensable chapter for an understanding of the past, present and potential future of translation studies. Starting from Holmes’s map, the chapter charts the development of the discipline in its various branches and argues that it happened in response to changes in perceptions in the intellectual climate generally, and in technology. Yves Gambier deals with the position of audiovisual translation (AVT) as an expanding field. He discusses how new technologies are offering not only new types of AVT, but also changing practice. In research, he explains how we are gradually moving away from case studies towards innovative approaches. Franz Pöchhacker reviews the position of interpreting studies within the broader discipline of translation studies, with regard to both its shared ground and its own distinctiveness, in terms of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches.

### **Part II: Defining the object of research in translation studies**

Our second journey leads us to one of the basic assumptions for a discipline: the identification of the research object. The aim of this section is to reflect on what has been/is/could be an object of study for a discipline such as translation studies. This exploration will lead us down various paths around three main issues: the definition of ‘translation’; translation and interpreting processes as research objects; and finally education and training, which are also research objects in their own right. There are other sections of this *Handbook* that complement this section. For instance, those chapters where the research is focused on the agent (translator/interpreter), or the context (see for instance Buzelin or Muñoz, this volume). Theo Hermans opens this section with a question that is not at all innocent: ‘What is (not) translation?’ He explores various definitions of translation and concludes that a globalized world will benefit from viewing translation as a cluster concept, which can accommodate cultural diversity and invites a self-reflexive analytical practice. Translating and interpreting processes are also the focus of research, as Gyde Hansen discusses in her chapter. Another area that we have included as an object of study in translation studies is education and training. Mira Kim writes on translation and interpreting education as a research domain that has shown substantial growth, with an increasingly visible shift from experience-based anecdotal accounts to evidence-based experimental studies drawing on

solid theoretical frameworks within translation studies or relevant disciplines. Finally, a chapter dedicated to theory as an object of study: Rosemary Arrojo closes this section and leads the way to Part III with a stimulating reflection on the relevance of theory. In her view, theory has been practically indistinguishable from the very discipline of translation studies. Broadly understood as a certain view or perspective on the complex issues raised by the translator's activity, translation theory is what ultimately shapes both the discipline and the profession.

### **Part III: Theoretical frameworks and research methodologies**

This section has a dual focus: to present the main concepts and ideas belonging to each approach, as well as the research methodology that usually accompanies each specific theoretical framework. Unfortunately, there was not enough space to cover every single approach available, so we have decided to track some well-trodden paths (historical, cultural, ideological, linguistic perspectives) together with some newer roads (corpus linguistics, sociology or multimodality). Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar provides an overview of the significance and position of translation history, exploring the different meanings it has adopted over the decades. The chapter discusses the relevance of translation history for translation theory and practice, and presents the ways in which the historical study of translation(s) may contribute to or revise the way in which translation is perceived in our present. In line with historical research, Nitsa Ben-Ari, in two short chapters, traces the trajectory of both Even-Zohar's and Gideon Toury's research careers. Her first chapter focuses on Even-Zohar's work from his early study of literature (and translation as one of the systems interfacing with it), via the development of his polysystem theory and on to the study of culture. The second chapter deals with the explanation of how descriptive translation studies (DTS) evolved as a reaction to normative, synchronic and source system-oriented theoretical frameworks. It traces the development of DTS and describes some new turns in translation studies, emanating from DTS or opposing it.

Leaving historico-descriptive approaches behind, we enter the realm of ideological approaches to translation research. Christi Merrill deals with postcoloniality and starts by pointing out that postcolonial translation scholars address entrenched colonial-era hierarchies in conjunction with theoretical innovations that might lead to an ethical practice of translation. The integration of theory and practice is a hallmark of this approach since it urges practitioners of translation to attend to the asymmetries of cross-cultural exchange, and urges postcolonial theorists to apply metaphorical concerns with 'cultural translation' to examples of interlingual transfer. Pilar Godayol, in turn, writes on gender and translation, starting with how feminist translators in the 1980s began to pay close attention to the concept of identity and to the representation of woman in and through language. This chapter carries out an archaeological investigation along three lines: theoretical origins (gender definitions, metaphors and myths in the feminine); historiographic research ('recovery and commentary' of women translators and feminist authors); and translation practices (feminine affinities and paratextual approaches).

Hélène Buzelin provides an outline of sociological research on translation conducted within and beyond translation studies. She highlights the kind of questions that are explored as well as the main theoretical frameworks and methods that have been used. Various fields of inquiry are presented, such as the translator's agency, translation as profession, the practice of translation in institutions, and the role of translation in the circulation of cultural goods.

Christiane Nord offers first an historical overview of the functional perspectives across history which eventually led to Vermeer's skopos theory and Holz-Mänttari's theory of translational action. Since translation pedagogy was one of the main concerns of functionalist scholars from the very beginning, the author traces the achievements of functionalism for translator training, before concluding with a brief sketch of functionalist research in the twenty-first century and future perspectives.

Adriana Șerban discusses the contribution of linguistics to the development of translation studies research. In particular, contrastive linguistics and the key areas of discourse analysis, text linguistics and pragmatics are outlined, with special reference to the conceptual frameworks that they provide, the research questions that tend to be asked, and the methods deployed to obtain some of the answers. The chapter ends with the position of linguistically oriented translation studies in relation to other research paradigms. Sara Laviosa traces the development of corpus linguistics from its origin to the present day and addresses a number of key issues pertaining to the corpus-based approach to the study of language and translation. Next, the role of corpora in the interdisciplinary and international field of translation studies is explored, with particular reference to research, education, professional practice and technology. Ricardo Muñoz provides an overview of cognitive and psycholinguistic approaches, main concepts, research areas and methods. After a brief historical account of this research area, he considers the impact that psycholinguistic approaches may have in the future on translation and interpreting quality, and on translator and interpreter training.

Klaus Kaindl explains the concept of multimodality in translation studies. After a short overview of the definitions of the term, he provides a full account of the state of research in the field of multimodality in translation and interpretation studies and the methods used in this field.

#### **Part IV: Specialized practices**

One of the main contributions of this *Handbook* is the underlining of the importance of theory and research methodology for specialized translation practices. We have asked our contributors to highlight this relationship in their analysis of the specialized field in which they are working, teaching and researching. Our first path leads us to one of the areas that has attracted more attention in the last 15 years: audiovisual translation studies (AVT). Jorge Díaz Cintas opens this section with a chapter on subtitling, where technical issues, space and temporal constraints, spotting and reading speeds go hand in hand with a critical overview of the research being done. Frederic Chaume in turn deals with dubbing. In his chapter he reviews theoretical and professional approaches, highlighting the notion of dubbing norms. The research in dubbing is analysed and future challenges are proposed. Within AVT, there are also areas that have been attracting scholars' attention recently, such as advertising translation. Cristina Valdés provides a comprehensive overview of research on this topic from different angles and reflects on some thoughts for the future in promotional translation. Eva Espasa explores the specificity of stage translation, as well as its connections with related disciplines, such as audiovisual and literary translation. It is for this reason that the chapter has been placed in this section. Espasa offers an overview of recurrent debates in stage translation research dealing with performability, authorship and status, and acculturation, as well as some questions for the future. Robert Holland closes this subsection dedicated to audiovisual translation by discussing the role of translation in the production and dissemination of news. It contains

both academic and professional perspectives and questions concepts such as accuracy and objectivity.

Chan Sin-Wai next discusses localization and its connections with translation studies. Particular emphasis is placed on its practical and theoretical contexts, the main conceptual differences and the future of the localization industry.

In our journey through professional specialized practices, interpreting activities are of special relevance. The specificity of conference interpreting is discussed by Ebru Diriker. She traces the beginnings of this practice and offers a critical overview of the different research paradigms used up to today. Maurizio Viezzi deals with simultaneous and consecutive interpreting in non-conference settings. He analyses the determinants of interpreting quality: equivalence, accuracy, appropriateness and usability. Holly Mikkelson explains the role of the community interpreter in different settings, including professional standards, ethics and relations with allied professionals. The chapter addresses controversial issues such as cultural brokering, market conditions and advocacy. Yvonne Fowler, Eva Ng and Malcolm Coulthard write on legal interpreting, with a focus on courtroom interpreting. The chapter contrasts the idealized principles of legal interpreting with the actual practices in the real world, taking into account the research methodologies used.

Still within the realm of the law, but changing back to the written mode, we take a diversion and arrive at a new specialized area: scientific and technical writing. Deborah Cao, using Holmes's map as a model, reflects upon the current status of legal translation studies, its strengths and weaknesses. Maeve Olohan in turn writes on the roles played by translators in the production and circulation of scientific knowledge.

The route into the translation of literary texts is driven by Emily Wittman. Her focus is on the major trends in literary translation, in the new translations of classic texts and in twentieth-century life writing and literary prose. This chapter is the best bridge to Emer O'Sullivan's chapter on the translation of children's literature, where the specificity of this genre is critically analysed in detail. Key issues such as target culture norms, narratology, the 'internationalism' of children's literature and translating picture books are considered. Lynn Long writes on the translation of sacred texts, taking into account its motives (the migration of religions, displacement of people, missionary enthusiasm and reform movements), and also its specificity (institutional control, varied audience profile and resistance to change). Finally, Jean Boase-Beier closes Part IV with a chapter devoted to poetry translation. She reviews the current situation of poetry translation within the discipline and in cultural terms, as well as focusing on the specific issues that characterize poetry translation, from the point of view of a practitioner and a researcher.

## Part V: Future challenges

The fifth part of the *Handbook* steps out again to look at the bigger picture. This section is devoted to future challenges in translation studies, and is structured into five main themes: globalization, new technologies, multilingualism, quality and ethics.

Michael Cronin focuses on the dominant paradigm for describing contemporary translation studies: globalization. The major parameters of space and time are explored and the relationship between translation and migration is examined in this chapter. The consideration of the impact of technology on the practice and conceptualization of translation in a globalized world leads the way to Minako O'Hagan's chapter, which provides a critical analysis of the impact on translation of new technologies, ranging from translation technology to crowdsourcing as well as new translation research tools. O'Hagan draws

attention to the lack of true interdisciplinary projects between language, translation technology and translation studies. In her view a technological turn in translation studies will enrich the discipline with a greater insight into contemporary translation as a technology-mediated activity.

A new route opens and a new challenge comes from the beginning of translation studies: multiculturalism, the main topic of Reine Meylaerts's chapter. Her chapter explores how multilingual writers and self-translators create new forms of translation. She also questions how it could be possible to ensure linguistic and translational justice in a world in which the territorial and monolingual principles of the nation state are at odds with the mobility and multilingualism of their populations.

In this section on challenges, the topic of 'quality' could not be missing. Juliane House, one of the key specialists in this topic, discusses key issues relating to translation quality assessment. She critically reviews several approaches to translation quality assessment and presents her own theory. The chapter finishes with the crucial distinction between linguistic analysis and social evaluation in translation quality assessment.

Our last challenge is introduced by Ben Van Wyke, and this is ethics. The chapter addresses the shift from the Platonic tradition to the contemporary post-Nietzschean context in which translators are no longer viewed as neutral mediators who simply transfer meaning across languages, but as active agents who play a fundamental role in shaping exchanges between peoples and cultures. José Lambert finished his prelude with an appeal to the importance of ethics in contemporary translation studies. We also felt that the challenge of ethics should be kept in mind and developed in twenty-first-century research.

### Final note

We are very proud to have been able to work with our group of contributors, who represent both the experienced and the new voices within the field, and who also share their time as both academics and practitioners. Their varied origin and institutional affiliation are a testament to the internationalization of the field of translation studies, which as we know is still one of our pending subjects as a discipline. In a volume of this type we have tried hard to provide a broad and comprehensive representation of translation studies. We hope that you find this *Handbook* useful and that you enjoy your journey around the complex and fascinating world of translation studies.

### Bibliography

Derrida, Jacques (1985) 'Des Tours de Babel', in Joseph F. Graham (ed.) *Difference in Translation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 165–207.