Knowledge Structuring In Translation Studies

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Abstract.   This contribution tries to distinguish between the traditional discourse of translation reflection and the scholarly approach to Translation Studies. Systematicity in the structuring of knowledge is an important criterion in that distinction. In the course of the development of the discipline, several institutionalization factors have played an essential role in the systematizing of knowledge. Both modern online bibliographies and encyclopedias are a case in point. In this article particularly the *Translation Studies Bibliography* and the *Handbook of Translation Studies* are used to illustrate not only the supportive, but also the research possibilities offered by large corpora. Systematical analysis of the data in larger databases can provide us with important meta-information about the development of the discipline as such.

Introduction

At conferences worldwide the discipline of *Translation Studies* (TS) is often still referred to as a 'relatively young discipline'. It seems that this expression has been very productive. But what is the most significant in this expression is the term *relatively*. Compared to *Linguistics* or *Literary Studies*, TS obviously is young and/or much less institutionalized. However, there are also plenty of adjacent (sub)disciplines that are much younger, like *Adaptation Studies* or *Transfer Studies* for example. So it all depends on the other element in the comparison. Over the past 60 years or so, TS has developed into a discipline with a history. It is typical for such a stage in disciplinary development that many new academic tools come into being: historical surveys, handbooks, encyclopedias, textbooks, dictionaries, journals, terminologies and bibliographies are produced. As this is exactly what has happened to TS over the last 10-15 years, we believe that it provides proof of a higher level of structure and institutionalization.

1. Translation Studies and translation reflection

Although only in the past fifty or sixty years research on translation has been carried out systematically along *scholarly* lines, it was preceded by centuries of (intellectually valuable, and sometimes challenging) translation reflection. A seminal textbook like Lawrence Venuti's *The Translation Studies Reader* [1] for instance contains texts by Saint Je-

rome (4th-5th centuries), John Dryden and Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt (17th century), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Friedrich Nietzsche (18th and 19th centuries). These older texts often tried to legitimate an existing practice preferred by the author. For that reason,

> discourse on translation was mainly attempting to prescriptively influence, or critically reflect upon the practices of translators, thus reaching a higher degree of abstraction. But it was only after the emergence of the discipline of Translation Studies, in the 1970s, that the metalanguage of translation started to resemble something like what we gather might be part of a full-fledged institutionalized expert system. [2, p.30].

One of the main differences between the older (often prescriptive) translation reflection and recent TS discourse is the systematic structuring of knowledge in the latter. Whereas personal or so-called idiosyncratic theories were/are usually based on personal observation and introspection, a scholarly approach requires a systematic engagement with the existing theoretical work (see for instance Gile at [3], including his references to Barbara Moser-Mercer). In a discipline that is not so young anymore, any scholar's attempt to gain complete knowledge of all approaches, trends and influences has become an illusion. As a result, the structuring of the existing knowledge is a prerequisite for scholarly dealings with a growing amount of materials.

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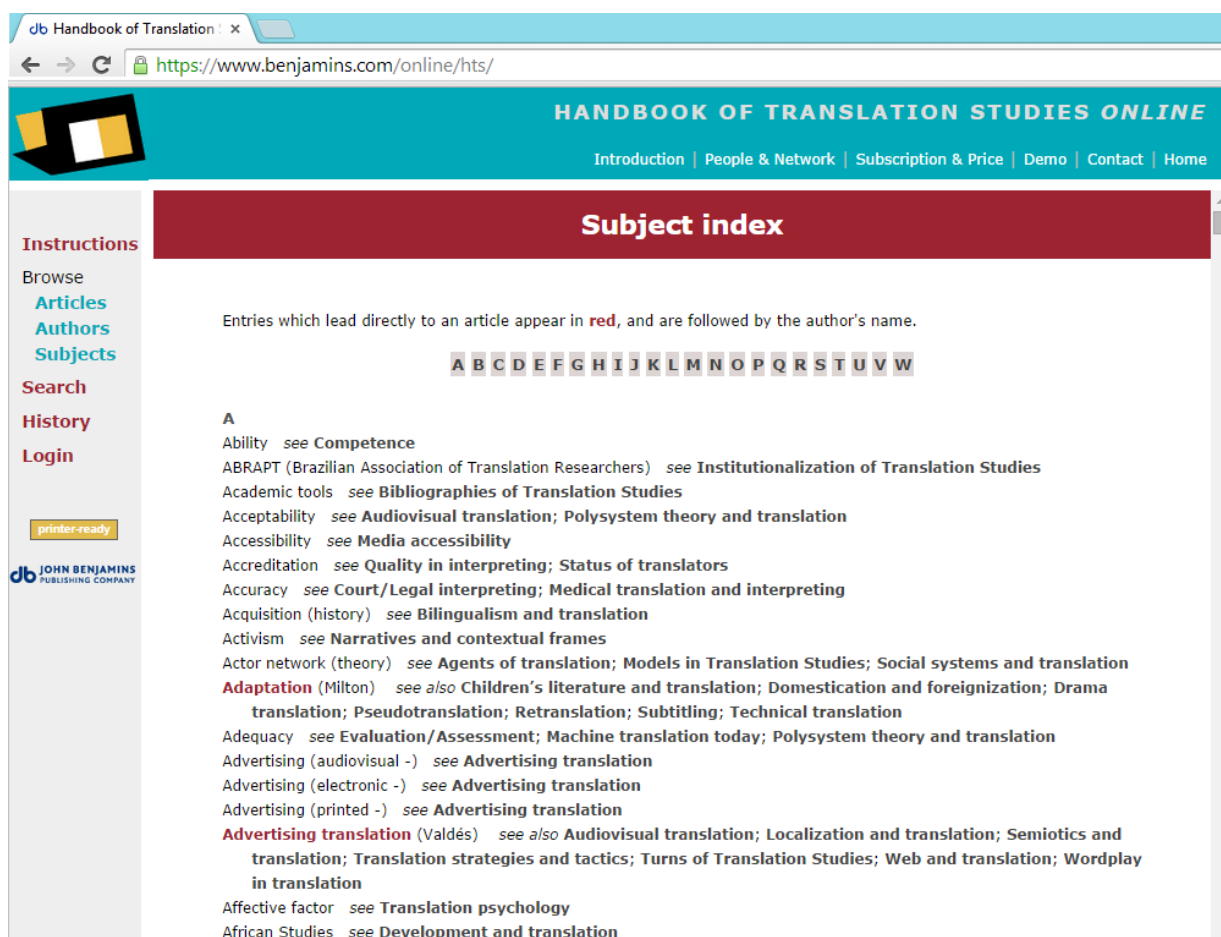
Fig. 1. Part of subject index in HTS online – <www.benjamins.com/online/hts/>.

It is exactly this huge growth of sources and materials, partly as a consequence of the institutionalization of translation and *Translation Studies*, which constitutes a basic 'problem' for young or starting scholars in the discipline. The selection of sources will directly impact on the kind of hypotheses built, the data gathered and the metalanguage used. A systematized research approach requires intelligent source management through the use of resources or tools. Therefore, this contribution focuses on the use of (online) bibliographies and handbooks or encyclopedias in TS. It will leave aside other aspects of institutionalization, like curricula, publishers, scholarly associations, PhD programs, conferences, Summer Schools etc.

As I am the co-editor of the *Translation Studies Bibliography* (TSB) and the *Handbook of Translation Studies* (HTS), the databases of these two tools are available for my research. I will therefore mainly concentrate on TSB and HTS as case studies, thereby illustrating the research possibilities of larger corpora for meta-knowledge about the discipline.

2. Knowledge-structuring resources

The growing amount of knowledge can be structured in several ways and by making use of several tools and resources.

As a more detailed overview of examples for these tools can be found in [4] for instance, I will limit myself here to the larger categories:
i)   historical surveys: mostly on geographical, chronological or linguistic criteria;
ii)   research journals: both in print and online;
iii) textbooks, as Venuti's mentioned above;
iv)   terminologies and/or dictionaries;
v)   handbooks and/or encyclopedias;
vi)   (online) bibliographies.

In 2011 a second edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* was published [5], a well-known resource in one volume and in print version only. In the same period the publisher John Benjamins had already started with the series called HTS, the *Handbook of Translation Studies* [6], a multi-volume print series, but also available as an online tool. It offers overview articles about TS topics (174 in total, spread across four volumes, and written by 135 authors), including an essential bibliography with each entry.

From the beginning, the HTS explicitly aimed at disseminating knowledge about translation and interpreting and at providing easy access to a large range of topics, traditions, and methods to a relatively broad audience: not only students, researchers and lecturers in *Translation Studies*, or Transla-
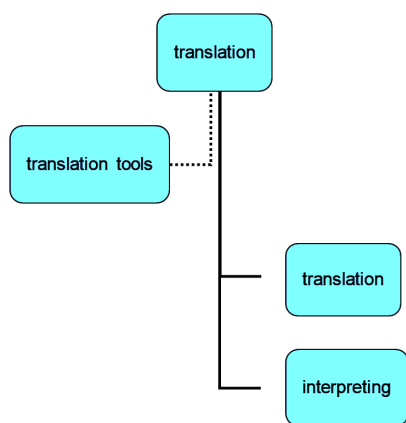
Fig. 2. Basic map of translation in the TSB.

tion & Interpreting professionals; but also scholars and experts from other disciplines (among which linguistics, sociology, history, psychology). Fig. 1 represents a part of the subject index in HTS online.

The HTS project is backed by a network of collaborating universities in South-Africa, Austria, Spain, Norway and Belgium. And interestingly, the *Handbook* is published in English but has started adding translations of individual articles to the online edition. At the moment of writing this contribution, some entries are already available in the online version in Arabic, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Ukrainian translation. More translations are being prepared in these languages, as well as in Chinese, French, German, Polish and Turkish, partly also as challenging projects for high-level translation students. Although *Translation Studies*, like other international disciplines, has become increasingly dominated by English, the translations of the *Handbook* discourse comprise a strong symbolic gesture in the direction of diversity while at the same pointing to the specificity of a discipline which in essence is language transfer.

3. TSB structuring principles

The online *Translation Studies Bibliography* [7] is a bibliographical tool with already a longer history. This annotated bibliography (with abstracts and key words for almost all entries) in its 2013 release contains approx. 26,000 publications with only scholarly publications on TS, particularly concentrating on the last twenty years (1994-2013).

As far as knowledge structuring is concerned: I have extensively described the open and descriptive character of the underlying conceptual maps as well as the keyword system in an earlier contribution (see [8]). The maps shown there deal for instance with modes of translation, fields of interpreting, transfer movements, translation strategies, procedures and techniques. These maps reflect the bibliography's understanding of the concept and field of translation & interpreting. The basic choice was whether translation (and as a consequence Translation Studies) would be limited to the written aspect of language transfer, or rather used in its

extended meaning as an umbrella concept for both written and spoken utterances (translation and interpreting). Other languages sometimes have a separate term for the umbrella concept at their disposal. German for instance uses *Translation* as a term covering both *Übersetzen* and *Dolmetschen*. But English does not, so a basic choice had to be made from the start. In TSB translation covers both, meaning that it is actually a Translation & Interpreting Studies Bibliography. Fig. 2 represents the basic map of translation in the TSB. The large majority of the more than 600 keywords in TSB can be found in the dozens of submaps below the basic map. All these submaps offer a conceptual guideline for the abstracts in the TSB; they structure and homogenize them by imposing a certain degree of uniformity upon them. Here is one more example to illustrate this: in translation quite a lot of procedures are used in dealing with language transfer (in interpreting usually called techniques). A separate submap brings all procedures together and leaves the possibility of adding new procedures or restructuring them in this partial map (see Table 1).

4. From search to research tools

Larger databases with structured information about the discipline also have an additional, often neglected advantage: the (both quantitative and qualitative) data can not only be used for search purposes, the databases contain ample interesting information about the development of the discipline as well. Let me take the bibliography as an example. Next to all the fields in the entries visible for the end user, the TSB compilers also include data like the author's affiliation (when mentioned). One does not need complex bibliometrical or scientometrical operations in order to measure the geographical spread of TS research activity. The affiliations already offer an interesting indication. This can allow us to conduct a refined comparison of publication activity per

Table 1. Partial map: translation procedures.

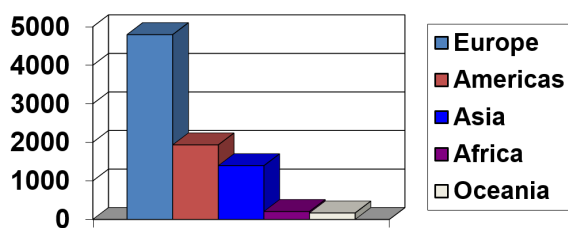| procedures (T)		
	$\Downarrow$	
acculturation	$\Longleftrightarrow$	adaptation
amplification	$\Longleftrightarrow$	borrowing
calque	$\Longleftrightarrow$	coinage
compensation	$\Longleftrightarrow$	concision
condensation	$\Longleftrightarrow$	denominalization
direct transfer	$\Longleftrightarrow$	dilution
expansion	$\Longleftrightarrow$	imitation
implicitation	$\Longleftrightarrow$	interchange
interpretation	$\Longleftrightarrow$	modulation
modification	$\Longleftrightarrow$	paraphrase
recategorization	$\Longleftrightarrow$	reformulation
addition	$\Longleftrightarrow$	omission
	$\Downarrow$	
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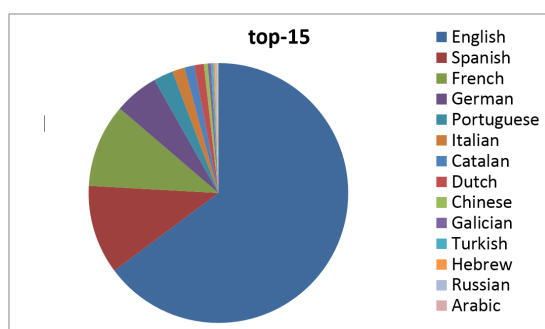Fig. 3. Analysis per continent of TSB publications.

Fig. 4. Languages of publication in TSB publications.

university or per country. Let's here stick to a very general indication regarding continents. The results are based on a TSB database analysis about two years ago, when there were approx. 23,000 publications in the bibliography. 37% of them indicated an affiliation of the author. So the results are based on many thousands of publications over the last 20 years. It comes as no surprise that Europe is the most prolific continent - see Fig. 3.

At the moment new analyses, also including indications and hypotheses for explanation, are being carried out for more refined country level results. In a similar vein, Gideon Toury has shown earlier with an analysis of the first 20 years of *Target*, how insightful such data can be [9]. Another example of highly interesting information contained in the TSB database is the (im)balance in the languages of publication - see Fig. 4. The dominance of English is no surprise, but one does notice interesting changes in the positions of the languages following English when seen from a historical perspective.

Conclusion

The systematicity and structuring principles underlying both TSB and HTS form a case in point in illustrating the fundamental difference between the approach of modern *Translation Studies* and the more traditional forms of translation reflection.

The knowledge structuring resources available nowadays in TS, which contain reliable data about many thousands of publications, not only serve as search, but also as research tools. Such resources are thus not only valuable aids in supporting our research; following systematic analysis of the data they contain, they also offer new insights into the development of the discipline.

After more than half a century of scholarly work, *Translation Studies* has now reached a stage where such meta-information clearly adds value and helps in developing a new line of institutional research about the historical evolution and characteristics of the discipline itself.

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