

The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies

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Introduction

In the present times, Translation Studies has gained prominence as a field of research within academia. *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies*, edited by Anne Lange, Danielle Monticelli and Christopher Rundle, was published in 2024 as a recent addition to the *Routledge Handbook* series on the field of Applied Linguistics. While presenting the major premises of their argument in the book, Lange, Monticelli and Rundle view translation as a “phenomenon in its own right” with “its manifestations in language, literature and culture (Lange et. al., p. 14).

In the introductory section of the book, the editors state that the term “Translation Studies” carries two meanings: on one hand it incorporates both formal research works on translation in academia, and on the other hand, it refers to the “practice of interpreting and translating” that existed much before the scholars started developing institutionalized knowledge on the concerned field (Lange et. al. p. 1). Borrowing ideas from Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, the editors focus on the formation of academic discourses on translation and interpreting studies (TIS), thereby incorporating responses of the scholars from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds.

As the authors mention, the previously published book, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (2013), has related the institutionalization of translation studies to the paper entitled “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,” presented by James S. Holmes at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics, held in Copenhagen in 1972. However, it was only at a Symposium on “Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary

Studies” that translation studies was “born” as a discipline (Lambert, 2013, p. 13). In the present *Routledge Handbook*, the editors offer a historiography of the development of translation and interpreting studies while discussing the contributions made by James Holmes, Eva Jung, Judy Wakabayashi, Theo Hermans, Brian Baer and Anthony Pym, among others.

Overview of the Chapters

The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies is divided into three major parts: **Part I** of the volume deals with the “Intellectual History of Translation,” **Part II** focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of translation and interpretation studies, and **Part III** relates some “Key Concepts” pertaining to the area of translation studies. The first part of the book includes six chapters that trace the history of translation studies, thereby highlighting the intellectual aspects that have been associated with it within the time period that begins in the era of classical antiquity and ends with the Second World War.

Part I: The first chapter opens with Douglas Robinson’s theorizations regarding the “**Earliest Discourses on Translation**,” where he makes note of various religious discourses that have been associated with the practice of translation. It includes the idea that translation promotes ‘unoriginality’ while neglecting the ideal doctrines of God. Robinson cites Julian Jaynes’ book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976), while talking about word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation that existed in the classical age with Cicero, Horace and St. Jerome as its main propagators. The earliest form of translation, or the ‘original’ one, was concentrated on delivering the words of the Gods both in the same and different languages, a factor that led to the development of intralingual and interlingual translations. This, Robinson argued, had a specific “psychohistorical dimension” as the translations occurred mostly in the human minds (Robinson, p. 20). The author talks about various countries like Assyria, Egypt, Israel, China, India and Greece, where the earliest discourses on translation (with an essentially religious dimension) could be located from the twentieth century BCE to the third century BCE.

The second chapter focuses exclusively on the era of **“Classical Antiquity,”** where the authors Maria-Kristiina Lotman and Ivo Volt emphasize the broader aspects of translation, which include translation across mediums (oral, written, etc.) and the interpretative and adaptation strategies that accompany it. Borrowing from Roman Jakobson’s idea of interlingual translation, the authors mention the political and cultural factors that facilitated translations from other languages into Greek. As the historical data reveals, translation achieved a status of prominence in Greek culture with “the translation of Scripture from Hebrew,” where the translators attained the status of Prophets (Lotman and Volt, p. 36). In Rome, the practice of translation began in the third century BCE with the increasing number of translations of Greek literary texts. Lotman and Volt discuss the contributions made by Cicero and Horace, who imitated the Greek forefathers while translating the texts into Latin. This, the authors felt, gave birth to certain intellectual ideas that found relevance even in the present times.

Ivana Djordjević begins the third chapter on **“The Middle Ages”** with the argument regarding the necessity of translation in medieval Europe, when the major literary texts were found in Latin, although it was not the mother tongue of the people. The territorial conquests and imperial expansions of the period resulted in a “complex multilingualism,” which broadened the scope of translation (Djordjević, p. 51). The author uses the Latin ideas like *translatio imperii* (which refers to the Westward inclination of the political power) and *translatio studii* (which refers to knowledge and cultural authority) that lie inherent in the historical perception of medieval Western Europe. While discussing the nuances of multilingualism in the Middle Ages, the author draws examples of the learned Jews in Medieval Spain “who had Hebrew as a sacred language, Arabic as language of culture, and the local Romance dialect as language of daily communication” (Djordjević, p. 54). This chapter highlights certain religious and sociolinguistic factors that facilitate the translation process while raising certain questions that are intrinsically associated with the practice of translation.

In the fourth chapter entitled **“The Early Modern Period: Renaissance to Enlightenment,”** Theo Hermans raises certain key

issues that accelerated the practice of translation in Western Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. In those ages, Hermans observed, Latin served as the “intellectual lingua franca” and hence, translations into Latin from other vernacular languages were highly favoured (Hermans, p. 69). A prominent factor that led to an increasing number of translations during this period was the prominence of the printing press. *The Bible* and other religious texts were rigorously translated into Latin, along with other humanistic writings. Hermans mentioned the names of some important translators of the period, such as Leonardo Bruni, Martin Luther, Etienne Dolet, Fausto da Longiano, John Christopherson, Juan Luis Vives, Pierre-Daniel Huet, Gerardus Vossius and John Dryden, among others. In this chapter, the author reflects on certain key factors like translatability, classification, justification and figuration that have led to an increasing number of publications of translated works during that period.

The fifth chapter on “**Translation in the Nineteenth Century**” by Anne O’ Connor et. al. includes a discussion on the theoretical premises that have led to the practice of translation in the given period. The Eurocentric approach to translation as an intellectual framework can be located in the development of communication media during the nineteenth century, which led to the easy accessibility and exchange of ideas in the context of rapid industrialization. Translation across the genres like travel writing, scientific journals, religious dogmas, economic textbooks and chapbooks were published, circulated, and read by the public. While mentioning the various key factors related to translations in the European context, this chapter also focuses on the practice of translation and the linguistic varieties that exist in South Asia, China and the Arab world. Here, the author focuses on the different theoretical approaches to translation that existed in the nineteenth century, which was also the era of colonial expansion and consolidation of power.

The sixth chapter by Natalia Kamovnikova focuses on the developments in the field of translation studies in “**The Twentieth Century Up to the End of the Second World War**”. As the author argues, studies in translation, that were initially restricted to the

philosophical and literary domains have gradually become associated with linguistics, as the scholars' focused on observing the language techniques and the process of rendering meanings. This chapter looks at the philosophical discourses in translation with particular emphasis on the translation aesthetics (an idea developed by Benedetto Croce in 1902), its communicative nature and aspects (proposed by Karl Vossler in 1932), translation and linguistic viability (propagated by Rudolf Pannwitz in 1907), the mission of translation (theorized by Walter Benjamin), the temporal and spatial discourses on translation from the original sources (developed by Jorge Luis Borges, Valerii Bruisor, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound), and the universality of human thought (proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein). While talking about the linguistic and literary discourses on translation, Kamovnikova acknowledges the contributions of the Prague Linguistic Circle and the Russian Formalists such as Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, Bohuslav Havránek and Milos Weingart. Although the focus of this chapter remains mostly on the development of translation as a discipline in Eastern Europe in the context of the two World Wars, it also briefly touches upon the translation-related activities in South-Eastern Europe, Turkey, India and China.

Part II: The second part of this book includes fifteen chapters (from chapter seven to twenty-one) which offer critical insights into **“Translation and Interpreting Studies as an Interdiscipline,”** thereby emphasizing on the research methods available in the domain of translation studies from the second half of the twentieth century to the present time.

In the first chapter of this section (chapter seven of the book), the authors Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Lada Kolomiyets focus on the **“Earliest Comprehensive Treatments of Translation in Eastern Europe”** in the 1950s and 1960s. This was the evolutionary stage during which the focus shifted from langue to parole, and other linguistic codes came into consideration. This chapter also points out the widening aspects of translation that include machine translation, semiotics of culture, and the linguistic and literary theories of translation in the USSR.

The next chapter (chapter eight) by Kirsten Malmkjær makes note of various **“Linguistic Theories of Translation”** that have gained prominence in the Western European linguistic discourse. The author mentions the theories of translation propagated by Jean-Paul Vinay, Jean Darbelnet, John C. Catford, Eugene Nida, Ernst August-Gutt, Ronald W. Langacker and Julian House.

In chapter nine, Christiane Nord focuses on the **“Functional Translation Theories,”** which emerged initially with the practice of university-based translators’ training and the development of translation studies in Germany in the 1960s. Nord also looks at the contributions made by Reiß, Vermeer, Göhring, Holz-Mänttari, and others, while locating the gradual emergence of functional translation theories and its impact in the field of translation studies in the years between 1990 and 2020.

Elin Sütiste talks about the **“Semiotics of Translation”** in chapter ten, which she theoretically establishes by drawing references from the Structuralist thinkers like Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Through a systematic study of various aspects of language, signs and translation, Sütiste tries to show how a semiotic angle aids in the “process of meaning-making” (Sütiste, p. 81).

Margus Puusepp and Anna-Riitta Vuorikoski draw the readers’ attention to **“Interpreting Studies”** in chapter eleven, while offering a brief overview of the development and current status of the IS. In this chapter, the authors emphasize the cognitive aspects, aptitude, strategies and challenges in interpreting research.

The next chapter (chapter twelve) acts as a continuation of the previous one, as the author Marie-Alice Belle chronicles **“The History of Translation and Interpreting”**. In the process of identifying the major theoretical discourses in the evolving parallel sub-fields of translation and interpreting history, this chapter acknowledges the contributions made by Georges Mounin, George Steiner, Louis Kelly, Frederick Renner, Henri Van Hoof, Itamar Even-Zohar, Theo Hermans and André Lefevere.

In chapter thirteen, Magda Heydel discusses **“The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies,”** which has become a centre of critical attention since the 1990s. As a result of this ‘cultural turn,’

translation is no longer perceived as merely interlingual or intertextual, but rather a “multidimensional process of intercultural negotiation” (Heydel, p. 233). While focusing on the cultural turn, this chapter also provides critical insights into Polysystem theory, feminist issues and the concerns related to gender, postcolonial dimensions, and future implications and continuations.

Sergey Tyulenev draws the readers’ attention to the **“Sociological Translation Theories”** in chapter fourteen, thereby providing the context of the ‘sociological turn’ in the domain of translation and interpreting studies (TIS) beginning from the 1990s and continuing till the early decades of the twenty-first century. In the process of offering the theoretical models of understanding the sociological perspectives in translation studies, the author also discusses the practice of the application of theories by scholars like Niklas Luhmann, André Lefevere, Andreas Polterman and Theo Hermans, among others.

In chapter fifteen, Kobus Margais offers a critical insight into the **“Humanizing”** trends in translation by drawing references from Anthony Pym and Douglas Robinson. While emphasizing the agency and structure in the academic practices of Translation Studies, Marais invites critical attention to the individual agents in the TS, with a focus on the themes or trends in the domain like functionalism, sociology of translation and neuro-cognitive studies.

Sara Ramos Pino discusses **“Audiovisual Translation Studies”** in chapter sixteen, which has emerged as an allied field of literary translation with its focus on the visual, oral and aural elements of a text. As Pino states, “the translation modes included under the umbrella term of audiovisual translation are subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, surtitling, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD)” (Pino, p. 278). While providing the historical background of audiovisual translation, Pino focuses on the multimodal nature of the audiovisual text, thereby discussing the research methods and means of production and reception.

In chapter seventeen, Kaibao Hu and Kyung Hye Kim offer theoretical models of understanding and approaching **“Corpus-Based Translation Studies,”** which is a subfield of corpus

linguistics. Borrowing ideas from linguists such as John Sinclair and Geoffrey Leech, the authors argue that the modern understanding of corpus in the digital era includes a collection of texts that is machine-readable and analyzed with the help of computers. While locating the evolution of corpus-based translation studies, this chapter refers to the norm theory and descriptive translation studies, propagated by Theo Hermans, Gideon Toury and Shoshana Blum-Kulka.

Kristiaan Tangsgaard Hvelplund talks about **“Experimental Translation Studies”** in chapter eighteen, which emerged in the 1980s as the scholars started collecting and using “empirical data to reflect on the core questions related to the translator’s actions and behaviour” (Hvelplund, p. 309). The author provides a brief overview of the research topics available in the domain of experimental translation studies that focus on the cause-and-effect relationship that exists between the translation materials, translation environment, and the skills and practices of the translators. While referring to the theoretical aspects of the domain, the author mentions and explains the popular methods like verbal protocols, keylogging, eye tracking, screen recording, reaction time tests, heart rate monitoring, and neuroimaging.

In chapter nineteen, Federico Gaspari talks about the **“History of Translation Technologies,”** with particular emphasis on Machine Translation, which emerged in 1949 with the mathematical experiments carried out by Warren Weaver. The author refers to the major experiments in the field of MT while highlighting the role of computers, the internet, statistical records, translation tools, online resources, web-based translation environment and the major setbacks in the process.

Sonia Colina and Claudia V. Angelelli offer **“Historical Perspectives on the Learning and Teaching of Translation and Interpreting”** in chapter twenty, as they chart the evolutionary process of translation and interpreting in the academia, from theory to practice. The authors focus on the role of language proficiency and bilingualism in translation and interpreting, which has significantly changed the views on language directionality and its acquisition. In the process of presenting the authority of translation

and interpreting (which must be viewed as disciplines in their own rights), the authors focus on the growth of the industry status, identity and professionalisation of Translation and Interpreting practitioners and teachers.

In the last chapter (chapter twenty-one) of this section, Mahmoud Afrouz and Mohammad Shahi focus on the **“Methodology in Translation Studies,”** which permeates all aspects of academic activity, including research and publications. Drawing references from Graham Hitchcock and David Hughes, the authors argue that “ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions give rise to paradigmatic premises which, in turn, have methodological implications” (Afrouz and Shahi, p. 335). While offering critical insights into the various perspectives regarding the translation methodologies, this chapter focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, the role of globalization, technological advancements, and new modes of research in the concerned field.

Part III: The third section of the book includes nine chapters (from chapter twenty-two to thirty) that deal with the various **“Key Concepts”** which are relevant to the field of Translation Studies.

Dechao Li begins his chapter (chapter twenty-two) on **“Translation”** with a historical overview of translation from its beginning in 2000 BC when the Sumerian epic poem Gilgamesh was translated into some ancient Asian languages like Akkadian and Hurrian. While defining the various modes of translation available all over the globe, the author mentions the earliest possible history of translation in Western Europe with its development in the era of classical antiquity, to its further developments in the Middle Ages, the Age of Renaissance, Enlightenment, Eighteenth Century and beyond. This chapter focuses on the translation activities practised in some of the Asian countries (like China and India) and the Arabic world, where words like “fanyi”, “anuvad”, “rupantar” and “tarjuma” are used for translation. While charting the history, development, and modern implications of the term “translation”, this chapter offers critical insights into the practice of translation in different cultural contexts, thereby mentioning the theoretical frameworks in contemporary translation studies.

In chapter twenty-three, Radegundis Stolze aims to discover the **“Meaning in Translation,”** as it is only the meaning that both the original text and the translated text intend to convey. Although translation theories gained prominence in academia after the Second World War with significant contributions made by scholars like Koller, Gentzler, Snell-Hornby, Pym and Munday, among others, the author argues that the idea of meaning in translation has altered across the ages. This chapter offers historical data on the entire process of meaning-making in translation through a study of the ancient translation methods (in the Greco-Roman antiquity) and their various stages of evolution in the modern context. In doing so, it offers fresh perspectives in analyzing the literary translations, semiotics, cultural nuances, feminist discourse, and other linguistic concerns to arrive at the conclusion that meaning in translation studies has transcended the linguistic domain to include the social and cultural connotations that are deemed relevant in the present context.

Reza Pishghadam and Samira Abaszadeh draw the readers’ attention to the **“Adequacy and Acceptability”** in translation studies by mentioning various dichotomies and categorizations of some key concepts like equivalence, translation strategies, procedures, or techniques. The authors provide a chronology of such dichotomies beginning with the classical ages with major contributions from Cicero, Horace and St. Jerome, who distinguished between word-for-word (literal) translation and sense-for-sense (free) translation. While referring to the developments in China and the Arab world, this chapter mentions theoretical discourses like Schleiermacher’s techniques of foreignization and domestication, Nida’s idea of formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark’s semantic and communicative equivalence, Levy’s anti-illusory and illusory translations, House’s overt and covert translation, Nord’s documentary and instrumental translation, Toury’s adequate and acceptable translation and Venuti’ alienating and naturalizing methods of translation. As the authors argue, these dichotomies are primarily related to the translator’s choices that are influenced by the social, cultural and ideological factors, and “not determined necessarily by the nature and features of the source text” (Pishghadam and Abaszadeh, p. 403).

In chapter twenty-five, Hanna Pieta locates the “diachronic evolution” of the **“Source and Target Texts”** in the field of translation studies to show that these notions are “untheorized” in Western European linguistic and cultural contexts (Pieta, p. 417). The author locates the relevance of Source Texts (ST) and Target Texts (TT) in the past as well as in the present contexts thereby mentioning the contributions made by Cicero, Dolet, St. Jerome and Yán Fù in the classical ages, and Robison, Schulte, Biguenet and Venuti in the contemporary era. While offering constructive arguments regarding the necessity of research and methods in identifying the relationship between ST and TT, the authors offer certain recommendations that the translators must follow in the process of translating a text from the source language to the target language. For this, the author recommends proper training of the translator, which would make the translation accurate and flawless.

David Mraček talks about the **“Directionality in Translation”** in chapter twenty-six, which refers to the language in which the translation has been carried out (be it mother tongue or any other language). Here, the author offers fresh perspectives on the idea of directionality in ancient and modern times, while mentioning the theoretical arguments presented by critics like Peter Newmark (1988), Chris Durban (2001), Dominic Stewart (2008) and Sara Horcas-Rufián (2008), among others. He also emphasizes the necessity of proper training of the translators, which would enhance their competency in identifying the directionality of the texts in translation. For this, the social and ethical aspects of this directionality must be followed. This chapter closes with a statement of facts regarding the emerging body of empirical data and directionality that can facilitate and sanction the requirements of institutionalized training.

In chapter twenty-seven, Christopher D. Mellinger discusses **“Translation and Interpreting Process Research,”** which is somewhat different from the practices in TIS. As the author argues, research on the translation process emerged in the 1990s with a renewed interest in the field displayed by scholars like Gregory M. Shreve, Isabel Lacruz and Erik Angelons, who justified the role of cognitive effort, syntactic disruption and visual interference in the

Sight Translation Task (2010). This chapter offers a historical overview of the research practices and methods in translation and interpreting studies while highlighting the critical issues that include the role of technology in translation and interpreting, its effective and emotional dimensions, and the possibilities of future research in the field.

Heidrun Gerzymisch deals with a key issue, **“Translation Quality,”** in chapter twenty-eight, which is an umbrella term for assessing the quality of two or more translated texts to locate their points of similarity, and the standard expectations or specifications. While discussing the relevant modern approaches to measure the quality of translation, the author mentions the qualitative and quantitative approaches that may lead to the understanding of the text that has been or is to be translated. This chapter also addresses the role of human translators in making the quality assessment, thereby pointing out the fallacies that can affect the process of translation and its evaluation.

In chapter twenty-nine, Sara Laviosa and Kanglong Liu talk about **“Translation Universals,”** an equivalent to the English term “universals of translation behaviour,” used by Gideon Toury in his monograph, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (1980). While framing their argument regarding the process of translation and its universality, the authors draw upon the theoretical paradigms propagated by Aryeh Newman (1987), Mona Baker (1993), Shoshana Blum-Kulka (1986), and Andrew Chesterman (2000), among others. Through their analysis of the existing theoretical models and their practical experiments, the authors conclude that “the quest for universals is increasingly being construed,” and it is thus legitimate to test the hypothesis that is formulated on the basis of research in the concerned field (Laviosa and Liu, p. 494).

In the last chapter of the book (chapter thirty), Arvi Tavast offers insight into the **“Agency and Performativity in Translation,”** by focusing on the role of “the doer (or agent) who carries out (or performs) the actions commonly included in the object of study” (Avast, p. 498). This chapter looks at the key concepts like agency, performativity, communication, artificial languages, metaphor, usage-based and diachronic linguistics. It also offers a historical

overview of the theory of performativity that emerged in the 1950s and its recent application to analyse the nuances of verbal communication. While discussing the current developments and research in the domain of performativity in translation, the author draws attention to the machine translation compels human translators to work for minimum wages for sustenance. Therefore, as the author suggests, the focus of the present research should remain on human translation and the scope of agency and performativity it provides.

Critical Evaluation

The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies offers a comprehensive history of Translation Studies from the era of Classical antiquity to its evolution and developments in the present socio-cultural and linguistic contexts. It also provides critical analysis and observations on various allied fields of translation studies, such as Sociological Translation theories, Experimental translation studies, Corpus-based translation studies, Audiovisual translation and Translation technologies, which direct the readers' attention to the multidimensional nature of the discipline. However, the discussions of this book are primarily focused on the developments in Europe, and little attention has been paid to the translation activities in some of the Asian countries (where China and India have only been mentioned) and the Arab world. In doing so, the book neglects the impact and reception of the key Asian texts by the European readers. For instance, the ancient Sanskrit texts that were translated by the European scholars led to the formation of a discourse on Orientalism, which Edward Said mentioned and criticised in his 1978 book with the same title. Also, the translation activities that are carried out in other countries like the United States, Africa, Canada, Australia, among others (or whether translation and its related activities are carried out in those countries or not), do not find any mention in the book.

Another major drawback of this *Handbook* lies in its limitations regarding the aspect of machine translation. While discussing the various nuances of machine translation and the role of computers in the process of translation and interpreting, the authors did not

adequately paid attention to the role and functions of Artificial Intelligence. The application of AI tools has increased manifold in recent years, and scholars and critics all over the globe and across the disciplines have dealt critically with the application strategies. Therefore, the absence of proper discussion on a significant aspect like AI becomes a major lacuna in understanding the present developments in translation and its practices in academia.

Nevertheless, the discussions of this *Handbook* would provide the readers with a clear understanding of the past research and present developments in the field of translation and interpreting studies.

Conclusion

Critical discourses on the history of Translation Studies have gained importance in recent years, a claim that can be validated by the increasing number of books and articles on the field published over the last few decades. Published in 1995, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* by Lawrence Venuti offers a historical background of translation across the ages. The book series on *Translation History*, edited by Andrea Rizzi et. al., and published by Palgrave Macmillan from 2019 onwards, is one of the pioneering series that offers an interdisciplinary approach to translation across time, place and culture. *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (2011), edited by Kirsten Malmkjær and Kevin Windle, chronicles the history of translation studies from the era of classical antiquity to the present digital era, while providing theoretical frameworks and practical experiments in the field.

The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies stands firm in its exceptionality by providing theoretical models of understanding translation as an evolutionary process. It shows how translation emerged as a practice in the classical ages and gradually developed into a constructive academic discipline in the latter decades of the twentieth century, with critical attention from the scholars in the domain. Therefore, in conclusion, it would not be inappropriate to cite the editors who have urged the readers, scholars and critics to consider translation and interpreting studies as an “interdisciplinary” field of study, something that is “[b]orn as an interdiscipline for the scholars who thought it necessary to have

translation as a separate field on the academic map of research, ... because translation is a phenomenon of interconnections” (Lange et. al., p. 14).

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