

## **Research Trend and Methods in Translation Studies: A Comparison between Taiwanese and International Publications**

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### **Introduction**

It is unclear whether translation studies are yet recognized as an independent academic discipline. The National Science Council in Taiwan has categorized it as a sub-discipline under linguistics. Increasing the quality, breadth and depth of research into the multi-dimensional mental activity that is translation may help translation studies become an accepted academic discipline.

As B. Hatim (2001, p.9) has pointed out, the status of translation studies has been improved by the establishment of departments of translation and interpretation studies training interpreters and translators, increased research interest from academics in other fields, and an increase in published research, academic exchanges and discussion worldwide. These factors promote translation studies as an independent academic field, and they are all directly related to the development of translation research.

Although Taiwan's translation research published in professional journals has been improving quantitatively and qualitatively, research training at the graduate school level seems to have reached a bottleneck. Students' theses primarily consist of transla-

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tion with commentary, and the research methods and structures are rather stereotyped, with fresh ideas apparently in short supply. Among the many reasons for this, curricula have recently emphasized practice and rejected theory, in turn leading to a shortage of research topics and a general unfamiliarity with research methods.

This study aims to compare the research results in journals and theses published between 2002 and 2008 from Taiwan and abroad and, from them, extract the similarities and differences of the foci and methods of research between Taiwan and abroad. We also hope that this will indicate future trends in Taiwan and provide a basis for a discussion of future translation pedagogy and interdisciplinary research.

Therefore, the research questions underpinning this study are:

1. What are the research foci of foreign and Taiwanese publications during the study period?
2. What are the similarities and differences in research topics and methods of the two reference banks?

### ***What Does the Recent Literature on Research Trends and Research Methods in Translation Studies Show?***

Recent key publications on research methods and trends in translation studies include *Unity in diversity* edited by Bowker, Cronin, Kenny and Pearson (1998), and *The map* by Williams and Chesterman (2002). The former questions the claim of interdisciplinary characteristics as the essence of translation studies in view of its theoretical diversity, and disputes the existence of a general theory of translation. The latter focuses on a description of research and research methods in translation studies. It systematically describes translation research and gives in depth but easy to understand explanations of translation research methods and processes. This book lists twelve key areas of research and suggests possible research directions for each area, roughly corresponding to Holmes' s "map" of translation studies (Toury, 1995, p. 10). They are (Williams & Chesterman, 2002, pp. 6-27):

1. Text Analysis and Translation
2. Translation Quality Assessment
3. Genre Translation
4. Multimedia Translation
5. Translation and Technology

6. Translation History
7. Translation Ethics
8. Terminology and Glossaries
9. Interpreting
10. The Translation Process
11. Translator Training
12. The Translation Profession

In Chapter 4, Williams and Chesterman divide research into conceptual and empirical or qualitative and quantitative. They stress that any empirical method, be it observation, interview, experiment, introspective methods, case study, corpus studies, survey, historical, or archive studies, cannot do without conceptual research. The difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that the former describes the quality of the research object to facilitate its understanding, while the latter provides data for statistical analysis in order to explore, describe and explain translation phenomena or even predict the possibility of phenomena occurring.

Hatim (2001) offered complete and detailed descriptions of research concepts, topics and models in *Teaching and researching translation*. However, he looked at it from the viewpoint of applied linguistics. He discussed how to utilize theories of linguistics, such as register, pragmatics, text linguistics, and genre, to form corresponding models or paradigms in translation studies. Compared to the areas of research and research methods listed in *The map*, Hatim (2001) does not show the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies. Though *Introducing translation studies* by Munday (2001) also covers translation issues, it is basically a history of translation theory developed alongside western translation studies. It offers no information on the scope of contemporary translation studies or of translation research methods.

In Taiwan and China, scholars have also tried to give an account of research achievements in translation studies, but in journal format rather than in the book format favored by their western academic counterparts. Hu (胡功澤, 2005) reported in *Studies of Translation and Interpretation* a survey on the masters theses topics of students in the translation graduate programs of Taiwan Normal University and Fu Jen University. He found these two programs dealt mostly with translation (literary translation in particular) and translation critiques, and, while not one thesis topic was on translation theory, their interpretation was heavily influenced by the characteristics of the prevailing translation theories and their degree of

recognition in Taiwan. Well-known theories were reader-response theory, Deconstruction School translation theory, and Functionalist theory. However, he did not offer any specific suggestion on how to incorporate these theories into the research topic and method.

Another Taiwanese scholar Liao (廖柏森, 2007), in a significant contribution to research on interpretation in Taiwan “The review of current interpretation research publications in Taiwan”, reviewed 18 interpretation related theses between 1991 and 2004 and 46 papers related to interpretation in *Studies of Translation and Interpretation, volumes 1-10*. In these papers and theses, he outlined the development of interpretation research, research method, and research target languages. Liao pointed out the deficiencies in interpretation research in Taiwan and quoted suggestions from Kurz (2001) for improvement. Liao, also, makes a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research and deductive and inductive reasoning, and described discourse analysis, interview, case study and observation as quantitative study methods. This seems to blur the distinction between the methods of data analysis and the methods used to obtain the data.

Liao criticizes *The map* saying that it does not provide explanation on how to choose research topics and employ the methods listed, and this seems valid. However, we cannot accept his opinion that this book “only allows its readers to stay at the level of distinguishing quantitative and qualitative research” (Liao, 2008, p.197). The research methods mentioned in this book are similar to those mentioned in other books on academic research (王佳煌、潘中道、郭俊賢、黃瑋瑩譯, 2003; 朱柔若譯, 2000; Babbie, 2007; Jendrek, 1998; Kumar, 1999; Neuman, 2006; Nunan, 1999). However, it serves to clarify the differences between qualitative research and quantitative research and the myth of the qualitative and quantitative dichotomy, and dispel the stereotype that quantitative study is more objective than qualitative study. The theoretical models of translation offered by *The map* can serve as a basis for a choice of research model.

A similar study to our research was conducted by Yuan and Tang (袁良平、湯建民, 2007) in China in their paper “A metrological analysis of translation studies during 2001-2006 in China” published in *Shanghai Journal of Translators*. Yuan and Tang conducted a frequency analysis of the titles of 1,610 articles in three different journals—*Shanghai Journal of Translators*, *Chinese Translators Journal*, and *Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal*. The result of the analysis showed that, in order of popular-

ity, translation research in China focused on “translation”, “English”, “research”, “English translation”, “culture”, “theory”, “translation studies”, “interpretation”, and “technology” between the years 2001 and 2006. The paper also pointed out trends in certain subject areas. Mu’s (穆雷, 1999) and Liu’s (劉和平, 2005) studies are worth mentioning, though the former’s research topics are limited to translation pedagogy, while some categories from the 10 listed interpretation research fields of the 236 papers in *The IRN Bulletin* on translation studies by the latter overlap with each other (e.g. “different types of translation” and “professional translation”).

Yuan and Tang’s study describes the current condition and focus of translation research in China, and documents changes in this field during 2001-2006. Our study is similar to theirs in terms of research method and goal, but our scope is wider because the collected data are abstracts from both Taiwan and abroad and research methods are also discussed. We include translation related journals from Taiwan but also provide data from around the world for comparative analysis. We explore the similarities and differences of research topic foci and research methods from Taiwan and abroad to serve as a feedback for translation pedagogy. Comparing changes in the popularity of research topics as is done by Yuan and Tang for China in 2007 is outside the scope of present study.

## Research Methodology

### *Building Data Banks of Abstracts in Translation Studies*

This study first builds a reference bank of abstracts from 2002 to early 2008 in Web of Science in the field of translation with the search terms TRANSLAT\* and INTERPRET\*. 1,171 articles related to translation and interpretation were found. Excluding articles without abstracts, the bibliographic information and abstracts of 1,099 articles were downloaded. The journals and the number of articles from each are shown below:

Table 1. International Publications from Web of Science Database

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Number of articles from 2002- early 2008</b>
<i>The Translator</i>	37
<i>Meta</i>	298
<i>Target</i>	99
<i>Applied Linguistics</i>	653
<i>Babel</i>	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>1171</b>

### ***Dissertations and Journal Articles from Taiwan in Databank***

This study uses the search terms TRANSLAT\* and INTERPRET\* to search the abstracts of papers and theses between 2002 and 2008 from the following databases:

Table 2. Taiwanese Publications from National Electronic Theses and Dissertations System and Journals

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Number of articles from 2002-2008</b>
Master/PhD dissertations	178
<i>Studies of Translation and Interpretation</i>	46
<i>Journal of the National Institute for Compilation and Translation/ Compilation and Translation Review*</i>	21
<i>NTU Studies in Language and Literature</i>	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>

\* Starting in September of 2008, National Institute for Compilation and

Translation publishes papers related to translation in the *Compilation and Translation Review*. Articles published before then were in the *Journal of the National Institute for Compilation and Translation*.

### *Keyword Extraction*

In the 1,099 articles from abroad and 259 from Taiwan, the authors have all listed keywords. However, there are no rules in selecting keywords. It is quite arbitrary and up to the author (Garfield 1972, 1979; Small 1980). Therefore, this study employed Wordsmith to produce the word frequency chart. As this study only shows the preliminary results, data analysis only selected 36 keywords and their lemma (For example, a keyword “culture” includes “culture”, “cultures”, and “cultural”) for foreign articles. However, only 33 keywords were selected for articles from Taiwan.

### *Article and Keywords 0-1 Matrix*

The authors built the 1,099 articles from abroad and 259 articles from Taiwan into an Access database with the abstract of each article on one separate line, counting as one record. The authors then annotated the 1,099 lines of records from foreign articles with their keywords and lemma. The 259 records from articles in Taiwan were also annotated with their keywords and lemma. After this step, a 0-1 matrix of an article and 36 keywords and a 0-1 matrix of an article and 33 keywords were obtained.

### *Multi-dimensional Scaling Analysis*

This study used SPSS statistical analysis software to conduct multi-dimensional scaling analysis on the 0-1 matrix made up of the above-mentioned 1,099 articles and 259 articles respectively, and their keyword annotations. Classic MDS (based on Euclidean distance) is carried out to for each 0-1 matrix. MDS is used to construct the spatial distance (i.e. the Euclidean distance model) between each chosen keyword and its lemma in order to construct a measurement for the research topic. A keyword that is not mixed in with other keywords in an abstract is a more distinct translation research topic.

### Human Processing Translation Research Method Comparison Analysis

Due to the difficulty in finding keywords related to the research method in the corpus, human processing was used. The comparison of research methods was done based on the method introduced by Williams and Chesterman in *The map*. Human processing is prone to the drawback of subjectivity; therefore, the process was done carefully according to the descriptions given in the book. When necessary, others' opinions were sought to obtain a more objective categorization and comparison.

### Results and Discussion: A Comparison of Research Focal Areas

*Research Question 1: What Are the Research Foci of Foreign and Taiwanese Publications during the Study Period?*

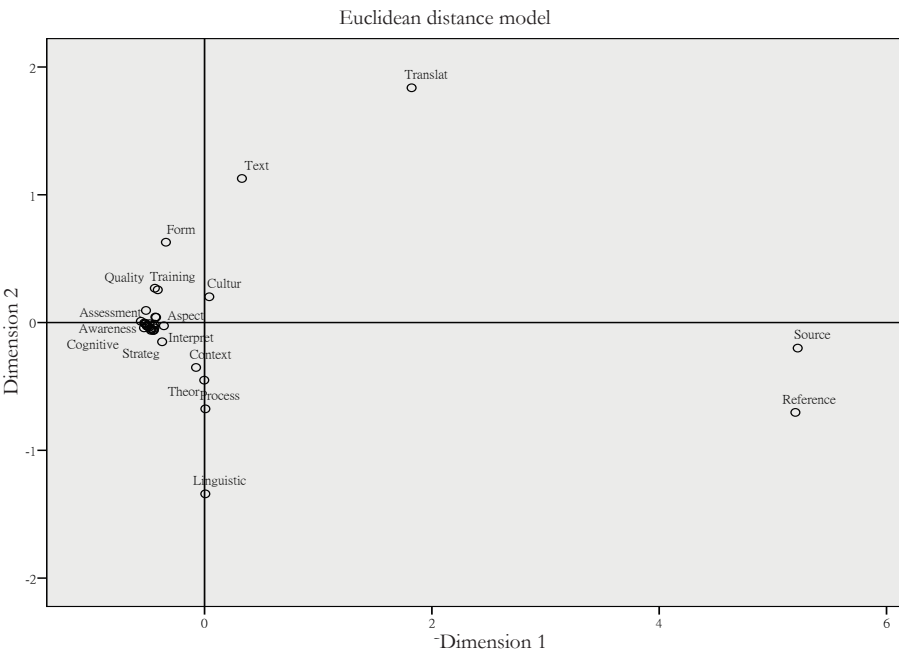


Figure 1. Euclidean distance model on research areas abroad



Figure 1 shows the Euclidean distance of the research areas in foreign publications. We can see that 13 keywords are clearly segregated from other keywords. This means that in the past five years papers containing these keywords are relatively independent and do not involve other keywords, which means that foreign research has 12 distinct areas/topics (Keywords “quality” and “training” are close together and, therefore, form one single research area.):

1. translat\* research
2. culture\* research
3. linguistic\* research
4. theor\* research
5. process\* research
6. context research
7. strateg\* research
8. reference\* research
9. source research
10. text research
11. form\* research
12. quality and training research

In Figure 2 we can see the research topics in Taiwan. 17 keywords are clearly segregated from the others. This means that in the past six years the papers, in which these keywords appear, are more independent and tend not to involve other keywords. Thus, there are 16 main areas of translation research in Taiwan (Keywords “quality” and “writing” are close together and, therefore, form one research area.):

1. Chinese research
2. English research
3. Taiwan research
4. Translation research
5. Process research
6. Language research
7. Strategies research
8. Interpretation research
9. Source research
10. Text research
11. Student research
12. Interpreter research
13. Problem research
14. Factors research

- 15. Perspective research
- 16. Quality and training research

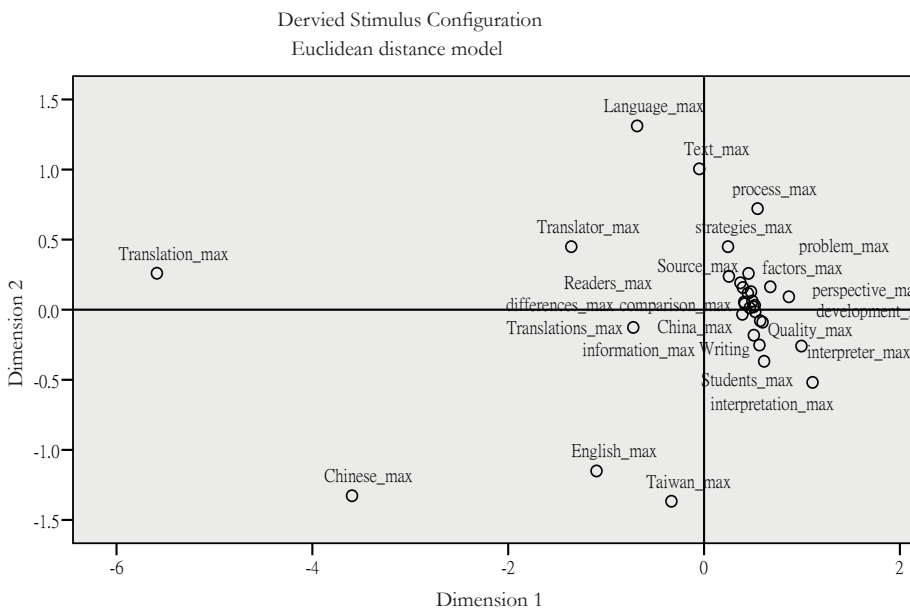


Figure 2 Euclidean distance model of research areas in Taiwan

Also, Figure 1 and Figure 2 both show that there are 23 and 17 keywords, respectively, showing no clear distance among the keywords. This means that the topics of the research with these keywords often overlap each other, not indicating any distinct research area.

*Research Question 2: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Research Areas and in the Research Methods in the Two Data Banks?*

Although the numbers of topic areas differ (12 and 16 respectively), many areas of studies do overlap, e.g. language, process, strategies, source, text, quality and training. Upon closer analysis, one finds that “translate\* research” in foreign journals correspond to “translation research” and

“interpretation research”. Similarly, the keywords “student” and “interpreter” often appearing in Taiwan’s papers also overlap with “quality” and “training”. This matches the research results by Liao (廖柏森, 2007). Research in interpretation is mainly about interpreter training (including techniques and strategy analysis, curriculum planning and lesson plans, and the current situation of interpretation instruction) and the evaluation of interpretation quality. These topics are categorized in the areas of “quality” and “training”.

“Problems”, “factors”, “perspective”, “Chinese”, “English”, and “Taiwan”, which are keywords that appear frequently in Taiwan’s papers, have not formed key areas of research in foreign publications. Conversely, “culture” and “reference” have only shown to be independent research areas in foreign publications. “Chinese”, “English” and “Taiwan” become distinct areas of study in Taiwan’s papers because the topics of papers published in Taiwan deal mostly with Chinese-English translation, though a few deal with translations of Japanese, German, Spanish and French. That the keyword “problem” appeared frequently in Taiwan’s papers may reflect the penchant for dealing with practical aspects in translation studies in Taiwan—starting with actual problems, defining them and finding possible solutions. Conversely, “Cultur\*” and “theor\*” are key research areas abroad but largely ignored in Taiwan. Hu (胡功澤, 2005) also pointed out the same thing. The keyword “perspective”, often used in research title wording in Taiwan as well as in China, does not indicate a research area but a favorite expression used in the local academic writing.

The results of this study also show that “translation and technology”, “translation history”, “translation ethics”, and “translation profession”, listed in *The map* as research areas, do not resolve as distinct areas of translation study either abroad or in Taiwan in the past six years. This suggests that translators and interpreters have not become established and recognized professions like, for example attorneys and accountants have in Taiwan, and that there is a need to research the translation profession and translation ethics. It has also highlighted the possibility of combining translation studies with information technology, and of providing a quantitative tool for relatively undeveloped study of the history of Chinese translation development.

The results of human processing demonstrate the similarities and differences of research methods from databanks of Taiwanese and foreign research papers. The research methods from the two databanks are basically the same in two areas: 1. Approaches in data collection used

in the publications in both databanks are similar, e.g. survey, case study, experiment, corpus research method. 2. Both sources apply theories, e.g. equivalence theory, skopos theory, and polysystem theory, to serve as conceptual framework for analyzing and solving problems or phenomena in translation. However, the biggest difference lies in preponderance of case studies found in reviewed literature from Taiwan. Moreover, authors publishing in international journals are more willing to challenge the existing theories or build up interdisciplinary relationships between translation theory and other disciplines.

Another phenomenon found through the manual processing is that various combinations of research method, research area and the theoretical framework or translation theory applied to analyze or explain the data collected by the research method can be observed. For example, the translation history of a certain period has been reconstructed by historical and archival studies, and described/interpreted by polysystem theory. This suggests the possibility that the three building pillars selected for a particular study can have a practical effect on the instruction of translation research and theory, and this requires further exploration outside the scope of the present study

## Conclusion and Pedagogic Implications

This research built a reference bank of publications from five renowned foreign journals between 2002 and early 2008 and a reference bank of translation related publications from Taiwan between 2002 and 2008. Keyword Analysis (provided by Wordsmith) and Correspondence Analysis (provided by SPSS) were conducted on the two reference banks. Then, content analysis was done on the two reference banks to obtain topics of translation research in Taiwan and abroad during the study period. 12 distinct areas of study were obtained for abroad and 16 for Taiwan. Both reference banks overlap in the areas of “language”, “process”, “strategies”, “source”, “text”, “quality” and “training”. Some differences in keywords are not really discrepancies in research focus. Rather, they are caused by the choice of words in writing the papers (“translate\*” and “form\*” vs. “translation” and “interpretation”; “perspective”; “student” and “interpreter” vs. “quality and training”). The two reference banks also displayed regional differences in the focus. “Chinese”, “English” and “Taiwan” are research keywords in Taiwan because

nearly all dissertations in Taiwan are written by students discussing translations between Chinese and English. Moreover, interpreters' instruction and training in Taiwan are often the research topics. "Problem" being a research topic reflects the fact that Taiwan's scholars see translation as a vocational field of study. Graduate programs are concerned about how to resolve the problem of translation practice and instruction. Conversely, publications in foreign journals focus on "culture" and "theory". In Taiwan, research on "culture" and "theory" is limited. These are possible areas for further pursuits. Raising the profile of "culture" and new translation theories, as suggested by Hu (胡功澤, 2005), is a priority.

Data from Taiwan show that translation studies are not confined to graduate programs in translation and interpretation or Chinese/English programs. It is studied by all language related departments, including Chinese.

Manual analyses of the two reference banks revealed that the research methods employed in Taiwan and abroad are similar and that translation theories were used to analyze and solve the phenomena and problems in translation. Also, a great number (37 in the reference bank) of theses in Taiwan are "translation with commentary". The authors of foreign publications have more spirit and confidence to challenge existing theories, and, they are more willing to use the results of other scientific research to describe and explain translation phenomena and even to solve the problems. Perhaps this has to do with people in the West being more willing to confront conflicts and try different things.

This paper has the following pedagogical implications:

1. Attention must be paid to ensure that translation commentaries do not become reports relating to how authors select a source text and research. The quality must be raised.
2. In the 12 research areas listed in *The map*, "multimedia translation", "translation and technology", "translation history", "translation ethics", and "translation profession" are all areas to work on in future.
3. To increase the quantity and upgrade the quality of university theses, helping students to compare how different theories can be applied to interpret, describe, and explain translation phenomena and practices, as well as how different areas, e.g. "culture", are researched, is as important as teaching them how to master format mechanics and research approaches for data-collecting, e.g. interview, experiment, introspective methods, case study, corpus studies, survey.

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