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## Translation studies as a discipline in the Chinese academia

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# TRANSLATION STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE IN THE CHINESE ACADEMIA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of translation in the Chinese language context, with particular regard to the People's Republic of China (PRC), has developed with unprecedented momentum since the early 1980s. Indeed, when Bassnett and Lefevere declared in the General Editors' Preface to their Routledge translation studies series that "[t]he growth of Translation Studies as a separate discipline is a success story of the 1980s" (Lefevere 1992: xi), their words rang true of the Chinese situation, whether or not they had this in mind rapidly when making that statement. Admittedly, the 1980s was a span of ten years and Bassnett and Lefevere did not specify any exact starting year for the development, nor did they give reason(s) why it was during the 1980s that the given 'success story' happened. However, with regard to the Chinese situation, as we will discuss in section 2 below, three indicators can be identified of the beginning of such a development. These were then followed by further progress that contributed to the disciplinary consolidation of Translation Studies (or TS for short) in the Chinese context.

Before we proceed to the main part of the chapter, however, a brief account of the background of development is necessary. First, by 'Translation Studies'/'TS', we refer to 'studying translation' in the contemporary, disciplinary rather than the broad, traditional sense. That is, when we talk about the study of translation during the pre-contemporary, non-disciplinary times, we would not describe it as 'translation studies' (as 'the study of translation' would be more suitable in this case), still less as its abbreviated form of TS. Second, by the word 'contemporary', as in 'contemporary translation studies', we refer to the timeline after the mid-1940s (i.e. after the Second World War) when the study of translation began to take on a new, modern linguistics turn. And third, it must be especially pointed out that, though the development of "Translation Studies as a separate discipline" was, as Bassnett and Lefevere put it, quite rightly, "a success story" of the 1980s", the story did not emerge all of a sudden – it came as the result of many years' continuous development.

Specifically speaking, the contemporary story of translation studies could be traced to the late 1940s and early 1950s for its adumbrations as a separate or independent (this later epithet seems a more suitable term to use and so will be so used hereafter) academic discipline both in the West and in China. In the West, as Wilss pointed out (1982: 52), "the science of translation" – an alternate disciplinary name for TS used by some people, for example, Nida (1964), Wilss (1982), Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997), etc. – lacked "a strongly defined theory and methodology" and a monumental work marking its beginning, not like Machine Translation whose "official beginning" was marked by Warren Weaver's 1949 Memorandum, or like Generative-Transformational Grammar by Chomsky's 1957 book *Syntactic Structures*, but it is nonetheless possible to see Nida's *Bible Translation – An Analysis of Principles and Procedures with Special Reference to Aboriginal Languages* published in 1947 "as being catalytic" towards the development of "the science of translation". Of course, in our view, other major works were also to be known, at various later times, as landmarks for the disciplinary development of translation studies, such as Fedorov's *Vvedenie v Teoriju Pervoda* (Introduction to the Theory of Translation; 1953), Nida's *Toward a Science of*

Translating (1964) and Holmes' 'The name and nature of translation studies' (1972). But it is arguably true that Nida's 1947 book bears the credit of being the very first major effort in the contemporary translation studies times in the West.

In the Chinese context, the name of Dong Qiusi was worth special mentioning. In 1951, Dong published a paper in the *翻譯通報* (Translators' Bulletin) entitled '論翻譯理論的建設' (On the Development of Translation Theory), proposing a 'scientific' translation studies (翻譯學) approach to tackle the issue of translation. In his view, "translation is not something unknowable; rather, it is an existential phenomenon governed by laws unique to itself, and therefore has all the qualities needed to become a science" (Dong 1951: 608, my translation; see also Chan 2004: 228). What Dong seemed to be doing in that paper was what Nida had earlier on in 1947 tried to do, i.e. applying a 'scientific', modern linguistics approach to the study of translation. Given the fact that there was virtually no academic contact with the West in the early years after the Chinese socialist revolution of 1949, Dong or his fellow Chinese scholars would not have access to, or be able to even hear of, Nida's work, and that the Russian scholar Andrei Fedorov's work was not to be published till 1953, a full two years after Dong had published his paper, we may say that at the time Dong's proposition on applying a 'scientific' translation studies approach to the theoretical development of translation was quite original, and seemed in large measure to be modernising Chinese translation discourse, in spite of the fact that Dong's paper did read more like a 'policy speech' than in-depth academic research (see comment in Chan 2004: 225-29), or in some ways it was not as substantiated research as were Nida's or Fedorov's works. Unfortunately, for some reason or other, mostly ideological and political, that promising proposition of Dong's did not come to much fruition in the 1950s, nor in the next two decades, and it was not until the 1980s, at a time when China began to implement its economic reform and open-door policies following the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), that the contemporary phase of Chinese TS development made a real start.

## 2. INDICATORS OF CHINESE TS GROWTH IN 1980s

Three indicators or markers can be identified of the beginning of the momentous development of translation studies in China since the early 1980s. The first lies in the launching in 1980 of the Beijing-based journal *翻譯通訊* (Translators' Notes), the then flagship journal for Chinese TS. It is noteworthy, though, that a similar journal by the name of *翻譯通報* (Translators' Bulletin), as mentioned above, had existed back in the early 1950s, but that journal was rather short-lived – it was first launched in 1950, discontinued in 1952, resumed publication in 1953 and stopped for good in 1954. Although the similarity in name to *Translators' Bulletin* made *Translators' Notes* look somewhat like a coming back to life of a past journal after 30 years of 'dormancy', it was in fact a very different journal not only because it had a different name, however small that difference may seem, but also in terms of the managerial and editorial policies which governed the journal and the content of its target publications. The journal became an immediate success as it attracted large numbers of translators and translation studies scholars across the country to use it as the country's most important platform for discussing and exchanging views on translation issues. Admittedly, the focus of most, if not all, of the articles published in the journal was more on the practical than the meta-issues of translation, i.e. issues concerning how translation was and could/should be done rather than what translation was in nature. In more specific terms, attention was, very much like in the past, rather heavily directed at whether, in the process of translation, one

should adopt ‘直譯’ (literal translation) or ‘意譯’ (sense-for-sense translation), or a combination of both, as if these were the entirety of issues on translation. But nonetheless, the fact that there was so much more interest in translation among Chinese translators and scholars than in the past was in many ways due to the work of the *Translators’ Notes*. Therefore, the 1980 launch of the journal could be looked to as the first major marker of the beginning of the Chinese TS era.

This first marker soon led to an equally important second. In 1983, three years after the successful launch of the *Translators’ Notes*, editorship of the journal was transferred from the China Translation and Publishing Corporation (CTPC) to the newly-founded Chinese Translators Association, followed in 1986 by a change of the journal name from *Translators’ Notes* to 中國翻譯 (Chinese Translators Journal). These two events were combined to signify a major step forward for Chinese TS, in the sense that the journal, especially under its new name, now served as a powerful rallying point for Chinese translators and translation researchers to actively engage in exploring both the practical and theoretical issues of translation. A rapidly grown awareness seemed to have been brought about that translation was not just a practice to be undertaken by practitioners, but it was also an important subject to be studied by researchers. Consequently, there were both markedly more meta-discussions of the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ issues of translation, made possible by the journal’s expansion from being a quarterly in the past to being a bimonthly at this new time of development, and its volume of circulation literally doubled from a reported 15,000 copies or so to more than 30,000 copies per issue. Such a figure must have then stood among the largest as compared with any other TS journal in the world and that could be seen as a strong reflection not only of the successful operation of the journal but, more importantly, also of the vigour and vitality with which translation studies was developing on the Chinese arena.

The third indicator bears upon the development of translation theory itself and is found in the convention of China’s First National Conference on Translation Theory. Held in the Shandong city of Qingdao in the summer of 1987, organised by the *Chinese Translators Journal* and the Chinese Translators Association in collaboration with the local Translators Association of Shandong Province, the conference was able to draw participants from all over the Chinese mainland as well as from other Chinese speaking areas including Hong Kong and Macao. Two keynote papers were presented on the first day, one by Liu Miqing and the other by Tan Zaixi, with Tan speaking on ‘必須建立翻譯學’ (The Necessity of Developing a Science of Translation) and Liu on the ‘中國翻譯理論的基本特色’ (The Distinctive Features of Chinese Translation Theory). Both papers were also published as journal articles, with Tan’s by the same title as his conference presentation, in the *Chinese Translators Journal* (1987, No. 3), and Liu’s, by the title of ‘論中國翻譯理論基本模式’ (The Basic Mode of Chinese Translation Theory), in a subsequent issue of the same *Chinese Translators Journal* (1989, No. 1). With the conference call being on the exploration of translation models and theories in the Chinese context, Tan’s proposition that the study of translation be developed as an independent, ‘scientific’ discipline was received with enthusiasm by the audiences, and led to heated debate not only at the conference but subsequently also on various other occasions. For example, at the First Postgraduate Research Students’ Conference on Translation Theory, held in the same year of 1987 at Nanjing University following the Qingdao conference, where the theme of ‘developing the science of translation’ attracted equally enthusiastic responses from among the conference participants.

In view of this, and in view of the various developments and debates which followed and which were associated with those three major indicators, it was indeed during the 1980s that translation studies in China eventually emerged as an independent academic discipline, which status was consolidated further in the years that followed. The developments referred to here include: (a) the large influx of foreign (especially Western) thoughts and ideas by way of introduction, translation and importation in the 1980s through the 21<sup>st</sup> century in China; (b) the publication in massive numbers of journal articles, books, research outcomes, textbooks and other types of materials in the Chinese TS field; and (c) other related events and developments such as in the fields of translation and interpreting teaching, training and university degree education.

The major debates on the Chinese TS arena, on the other hand, cover various issues and topics such as reflected around these questions: (a) Is translation a science or an art? What is the disciplinary nature of translation studies? (b) Is the introduction of foreign translation theory beneficial or detrimental to the development of Chinese translation theory? (c) Is there ‘translation theory’ in the Chinese translation tradition? Is there a ‘Chineseness’ in Chinese translation theory, and how should or can such a ‘Chineseness’ be developed?

Clearly, these developments and debates are not mere markers of the momentous first phase of Chinese TS growth in the 1980s. They also point to developments and debates within the entire time range of the 1980s through the 1990s up to the new era. To fully understand and appreciate such a continuum, a more specific examination is in order in the following section.

### **3. MAJOR CHINESE TS DEVELOPMENTS AND DEBATES FROM 1980s THROUGH 1990s TO THE PRESENT**

#### **3.1 Major Chinese TS developments**

##### **3.1.1 Introduction of foreign translation theory**

One of the most notable developments in Chinese TS has been the introduction of foreign translation theory. Back in the early 1980s, China had just begun to open up to the outside world after an entire ten years of a destructive Cultural Revolution. The nation was then on the move for change. Not only was there the urge for open-door engagement with other nations in the world economically, but there was also great enthusiasm for cultural exchange, including exchange in the field of translation. It was in that context that an unprecedented, huge influx of foreign (especially Western and Soviet Russian) thoughts and ideas began to emerge in the Chinese translation studies field. The earliest article spearheading that influx was Yi’s review article on ‘西方的文學翻譯’ (Literary Translation in the West), published in 1980, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of the newly launched *Translators’ Notes*. This led on to a second, a third, and an innumerable many others, published in various translation and foreign language studies journals (for a more detailed account of these journals, see further below).

In 1983, a collection of papers was published, the first of its kind in Chinese in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on Western translation theory. By the title of *外國翻譯理論評介文集* (Selected Essays on Foreign Translation Theory), edited and published by CTPC, this volume of 14 articles introduced such Western and Soviet Russian TS figures as Eugene Nida, Andrei V.

Fedorov, John Catford, Peter Newmark, Roman Jakobson, Leonid S. Barkhudarov, and Givi R. Gachechiladze. Though many of these names were not new to Chinese readers because of their earlier journal appearances, the collection of various articles in a single volume still had a powerful impact on the emerging Chinese TS scene. This impact was further strengthened by the publication of *奈達論翻譯* (Nida on Translation; Tan 1984), and successively afterwards by other translations or ‘transadaptations’ of Western and Soviet Russian works including Barchudarov’s *Yazyk i perevod* (tr. as: 語言與翻譯/Language and Translation; Cai et al. 1985), George Steiner’s *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (tr. as: 通天塔：文學翻譯理論與研究; Zhuang 1987), Gachechiladze’s *Vvedenie v teoiyu khudozhestvennogo perevoda* (tr. as: 文藝翻譯與文學交流/An Introduction to the Theory of Literary Translation; Cai and Yu 1987), Delisle’s *L’analyse du discours comme methode de traduction* (tr. as: 翻譯理論與翻譯教學法; Sun 1988), and John Catford’s *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (tr. as: 翻譯的語言學理論; Mu 1991).

**The unique influence of Nida on Chinese TS** Of all Western names known to the Chinese, that of Eugene Nida or 尤金•奈達 (Youjin Naida) in Chinese, is worth particular mentioning. As pointed out in a special contribution by Tan in *Translators and Their Readers. In Homage to Eugene A. Nida* edited by Rodica Dimitriu and Miriam Shlesinger (Tan 2009a), Nida’s name was first introduced by Lin Shuwu in an article published in 1981 in the journal of *國外語言學* (Linguistics Abroad). Entitled ‘奈達的翻譯理論簡介’ (A Brief Introduction to Nida’s Translation Theory; Lin 1981), that article reviewed Nida’s three-step model of the translation process and discussed how Nida’s concept of kernel constructions and Chomsky’s transformational-generative grammar were related. The article emphasised that Nida’s translation theory was based on the linguistics of translation, and that it was influenced by transformational-generative grammar.

However, as we see it, Nida’s ‘kernel sentence transfer’ concept only constitutes a small part of his theoretical repertoire on translation. Therefore, Lin’s article apparently did not do enough justice to Nida because his readers were led to believe that the most important contribution of Nida lies in his kernel sentence proposition. As the article was primarily targeted at a linguistics audience and was carried in a linguistics rather than translation studies journal, it did not circulate widely among translation scholars, and so its influence on Chinese TS was limited.

The major influence of Nida on the minds of Chinese translation scholars came at a later time. It began with the publication in 1982 in the *Translators’ Notes* of the next major article on Nida entitled ‘翻譯是一門科學——評介奈達著「翻譯科學探索」’ (Translation is a Science: An introduction to Nida’s *Toward a Science of Translating*), followed in 1983 by ‘奈達論翻譯的性質’ (Nida on the Nature of Translation), published in the same journal, and in 1984 by *Nida on Translation* (as mentioned previously) published by CTPC. References to Nida’s thoughts and ideas began to appear, in large numbers, in university degree dissertations, research papers and TS publications. In 1984, there came the publication in Beijing of the book entitled *On Translation: With Special Reference to Chinese and English*, written in English and co-authored by Jin Di and Eugene Nida himself. This was followed in 1987 by a co-authored article in Chinese by Tan and Nida on ‘論翻譯學的途徑’ (Approaches to Translation, 1987), published in the reputable journal of *外語教學與研究* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research). So not only through translations, introductions and studies on Nida,

but also through co-authored publications, Nida came forth to both directly and indirectly address the Chinese audience with his ideas on ‘dynamic/functional equivalence’ and ‘equal receptor-response’.

All these efforts contributed to the build-up of Nida’s influence on China’s contemporary translation studies, so much so that by the end of the 1980s the name of Eugene Nida was on almost everybody’s lips in the Chinese TS field, in much the same way as what had happened during a long period of time to the name of Yan Fu (1854-1921), the best-known Chinese translation theorist of the modern times. There were many reasons why this happened. Firstly, as mentioned above, the China of the time, especially during the early part of the 1980s, was just opening up, and there was a strong desire to learn about what had happened in other nations while China was in isolation from them. Secondly, given the big name he had already established in the translation studies world in the West, the selection of Nida for introduction was undoubtedly a right choice. In a sense, Nida’s popularity among Chinese scholars was an extension of his influence back in his home culture. Thirdly, Nida’s ideas, especially those on ‘dynamic equivalence’ and ‘equal receptor-response’, represented a kind of novelty to the Chinese tradition of translation where the main concern had all along been centred around the dispute between ‘literal translation 直譯’ and ‘sense-for-sense translation 意譯’. Fourthly, and in retrospect this might have been one of the most important reasons, Nida’s translation theory was considered by the Chinese to be largely practice-oriented, albeit mainly towards the translation of the Bible. Such a practical orientation readily fit in with an equally practice-minded Chinese tradition of translation. This partly explains why other, ‘meta-level’ ‘linguistic theories’ of translation did not become as popular with the Chinese translator and translation studies scholar, even though they were also introduced into China at more or less the same time as the Nida model (e.g. Catford’s ‘linguistic theory of translation’).

Indeed, the introduction of Nida’s translation theory to Chinese readers ushered in an upheaval of Chinese interest in the 1980s in the study of Nida as one of the best-known translation figures in the Western world of the 20th century. That interest, though in somewhat reduced intensity during the 1990s, has nonetheless remained active to this day. This can be shown by the extensive scale on which papers were written by Chinese students, teachers and researchers on Nida. According to a survey by Chen Hongwei (2001) of Nida’s influence on Chinese TS, of the 849 articles on topics of translation published from 1980 to 2000 in the *Chinese Translators Journal*, 92 items are studies on Nida, taking up more than 10% of the journal’s total output of papers. The extensive interest in the study and application of Nida’s translation theory has remained true even in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries when a lot of research interest was beginning to be diverted to other approaches such as the postcolonial, the deconstructionist, the polysystem, the *skopos*, the gender studies and other cultural approaches. A quick search through the biggest Chinese database on publications in Chinese journals, i.e. the China Journal Net (中國期刊全文資料庫), and the largest on-line search engine on China’s academic works including Master’s and doctoral dissertations in Chinese universities (i.e. the cnki.net [中國知網]) reveals a very large pool of papers and dissertations on Nida over the past years. As of the first half of 2008, a rough calculation of the research outputs on Nida puts the figure of journal articles at more than a hundred (in addition to the 92 items published in the *Chinese Translators Journal* between 1980-2000 covered in Chen’s above-mentioned survey), and university degree dissertations at more than fifty. These are items that explicitly carry the name of Nida in their titles. If one includes items which do not contain the name of Nida in their titles but which are related in one way or another to Nida’s

theory on ‘dynamic/functional equivalence’ and ‘equal receptor-response’, the figure would be considerably higher.

These above-cited figures must indicate how influential Nida has been on translation studies in China, which, in turn, epitomises overall Western (and to a lesser extent Soviet Russian) influence on Chinese TS since the 1980s. Admittedly, Western thoughts and ideas, including those of Nida, did not come into the contemporary Chinese TS scene without encountering criticism and resistance. Towards the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, questions were raised against Nida’s theory, concerning, for example, his application of the ‘deep structure’ concept to the study of translation problems (Chen and Wu 1987), his ‘dynamic equivalence’ (Lin 1988; Wu 1994), and his ‘equal receptor-response’ (Qian 1988; Liu 1997). Some of the criticisms sounded quite dismissive (though often unjustifiably so, e.g. those in Liu 1997). Also, almost right from the beginning of the post-Cultural Revolution import of foreign or Western thoughts and ideas on translation, there have been unhappy voices and sometimes even resistance from among Chinese scholars against this import, as these scholars either did not quite see it necessary for the ‘self-sufficient’ Chinese tradition of translation to ‘borrow’ theory from other systems (Luo 1984), or were worried that Chinese translation theory would be overwhelmed by the “excessive import of Western ideas” (Zhang 2006: 59). It was this kind of ‘unhappy voices’ or resistance, together with their underpinning rationale, that gave rise to one of the major debates that Chinese TS has seen during its past years of development, i.e. on whether the introduction of foreign (especially Western) translation theory is useful or harmful to Chinese translation theory. As a further discussion will be provided of this debate in section 3.2.2 below, we shall not dwell on the issue here. Suffice it to say at this point that, in spite of the different, sometimes strongly resistant, views and opinions, especially from among those who may be described as ‘conservatives’ and ‘traditionalists’ (Tan 2009b: 285-292), the introduction of and learning from foreign translation theories that began in the early 1980s have not really ceased.

### 3.1.2 Massive TS publications in Chinese

A second, related development in Chinese TS has been the publication in massive numbers of TS research outputs. As seen from the preceding paragraphs, the massive influx of foreign translation theory since the 1980s necessarily indicated a massive scale of publications. Hundreds and thousands of TS articles (introductory and review articles on foreign translation theories included) were published over the past 30 or more years, not only in the most prominent Chinese TS journal, i.e. the *Translators’ Notes* and its subsequently renamed *Chinese Translators Journal*, but also in other major journals on translation and language studies and on linguistics. These include: (a) the aforementioned *外語教學與研究* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research; relaunched in 1977 after 11 years of suspension [1966-1977], first launched in 1957; based in Beijing); (b) *當代語言學* (Contemporary Linguistics, based in Beijing, formerly named *國外語言學* [Linguistics Abroad, 1980-2010], *語言學動態* [Developments in Linguistics, 1978-1980], *語言學資料* [Materials in Linguistics, 1962-1966], first launched in 1962 as a supplementary journal to the 1953-founded *中國語文* [Studies of the Chinese Language]); (c) *外國語* (Journal of Foreign Languages, launched in 1978 and based in Shanghai); (d) *現代外語* (Modern Foreign Languages, launched in 1978 and based in Guangzhou); (e) *外語與外語教學* (Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, launched in 1985 and based in Dalian); (f) *中國科技翻譯* (Chinese Science and Technology Translators Journal, launched in 1988 and based in Beijing; and (g) *上海翻譯* (Shanghai

Journal of Translators, formerly named *上海科技翻譯* [Shanghai Journal of Translators for Science and Technology, 1986-2005], first launched in 1986). (It must be mentioned here that, apart from these journals in the Chinese mainland, there are also important TS journals published in Taiwan and Hong Kong, including, for example, *編譯論叢* [Compilation and Translation Review] in Taiwan, launched in 2008; and *翻譯季刊* [Translation Quarterly] and *翻譯學報* [Journal of Translation Studies] in Hong Kong, launched in 1995 and 1997 respectively. The impact of these journals on TS research is not merely confined to Taiwan and Hong Kong, but it has also been strong on TS research in the context of the Chinese mainland and beyond.) From time to time TS articles are also found carried in virtually every university journal across the nation (there being an overall estimate of not less than two thousand of such university journals in China). In more concrete terms, according to a study of 15 'major' Chinese translation and foreign language studies journals (Xu 2009), the number of TS articles published in these journals between 1979–2008 is as big as 9,000. If one factors in the many 'non-major' journals, the hundreds of general university journals that may have also occasionally carried TS articles, and the numerous conference papers (published or unpublished), and if one also factors in the 7 additional years from 2008 to the end of 2015, it would be safe to put the number of TS articles and papers at more than double that figure.

Equally enormous is the number of published Chinese TS books, including monographs, anthologies, conference proceedings, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, textbooks, and doctoral and other university degree dissertations. According to the statistics provided in Xu (2009), during the 30 years from 1979 to 2008, a total of 1,600 books in TS were published, most of them in the post-1990 period. Of these, the number of translation or translation studies textbooks takes the greatest proportion, amounting to 52% of the total turnout; followed by a 13% of collections of TS essays; a 10% of translation techniques books or handbooks, most of which address the language combination of English and Chinese, mainly dealing with non-literary text types; a 9% of theoretical TS books; and the remainder is of translation histories, dictionaries and other tool types of books. Following the same logic described above, that is, if one takes into account the 7 more recent years when Chinese TS has been progressing with an even greater momentum, it would be justifiable to say that the number of TS publications must now stand at far greater a figure than that provided in Xu's 2009 presentation.

### **3.1.3 Major development in TS teaching and education**

The third major development in Chinese TS relates itself to the teaching and training of and education in translation and interpreting. It is understood that, among the essential constructs for a developed TS as an independent discipline, the training and education of TS talents must always be regarded highly, because without this most fundamental construct, there would be no motivating force for sustained TS development. It is with this understanding that we may attribute the vigorous and forever growing interest in TS development in China to the massive efforts being made on the translation/interpreting teaching and educational front. To some extent, since the early 1980s China has increasingly become one of the fast growing TS training and education centres in the world. For example, according to statistics provided by Xu (Xu and Mu 2009: 5), as of 2009, most of the 1,200 institutions of tertiary education in China which had foreign language schools or departments had offered translation/interpreting courses; some 150 of them had run research-based Master's Degree programmes in translation and interpreting, and more than 40 profession-oriented MA in Translation or

Interpreting (or MTI) programmes; more than 30 TS doctoral programmes and some 19 BA degree in T/I programmes; not to mention the vast number of foreign language training centres and evening or summer schools across the country where translation and interpreting as well as TS courses were also taught.

Worth special mentioning at this point are the teaching and training of translation in other Chinese-language contexts, especially those of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Often described as Asia's world city where East meets West, Hong Kong has always enjoyed a unique position in communication across languages and cultures. As noted in Tan (2014: 48), after 1997 when China resumed sovereignty and Hong Kong entered its new phase of development under the principle of 'one country, two systems', a proactive language policy of 'bi-literacy and tri-lingualism' (兩文三語) continued to engage East-West interaction in the region. With such a strategic position, Hong Kong has become one of the most important hubs of interlingual communication in Asia as well as the world, in particular one for the teaching and training of translators and interpreters. Of the eight government-funded universities in Hong Kong, seven offer translation programmes at the undergraduate level, five at the MA level, and five at the MPhil and/or doctoral level. Viewed both in terms of the large number of translation programmes in proportion to the relatively small size of Hong Kong, and in terms of how they have been successfully operating and expanding over the past decades, starting from the setting up in 1972 of the first ever academic department of translation in Hong Kong, i.e. the Department of Translation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, these translation and interpreting programmes have undoubtedly played a leading role in the field of TS degree education in the Chinese-language context. In the face of the rapid emergence and development in recent years of TS programmes in the Chinese mainland (the professionally-oriented MTI programmes included), new efforts are being made and new pedagogical models (such as the student-centred OBTL [Outcomes-based Teaching and Learning] model) are being implemented across the various institutions in Hong Kong, so as to meet up new challenges and further enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, and these again in many ways seem to be setting a new pedagogical model for other Chinese language-related translation programmes to follow, including those in the Chinese mainland.

In Taiwan, important developments were also seen over the past years in the teaching and training of translators and interpreters. Among the better known institutions offering TS degree education are Fu Jen Catholic University (FJCU), National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), Chang Jung Christian University, Changhua University of Education and Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages. Since the inception in 1988 of the first Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation in Taiwan, i.e. that of FJCU, which in 2010 was incorporated into the Graduate Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies, the teaching of translation and interpreting has been progressing steadily across Taiwan, with a broadening of the range of TS degree programmes, from an initial, limited postgraduate level at FJCU and NTNU to fuller-fledged programmes covering both the postgraduate and undergraduate levels at most of the TS degree-offering institutions. Undoubtedly, the teaching and training of translators and interpreters in Taiwan, like those in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong (for lack of space, no discussion is made here of Macao, but the same description applies there as well), have drawn wide social recognition as they not only lead to the offering of TS degrees, hence enhancing communal awareness that translation studies has become an independent academic discipline, but even more importantly they cultivate and turn out skilled professionals for the translation and interpreting community, whose role must be seen as indispensable for the rapidly growing economy of the region and during the rapidly globalising times.

## 3.2 Major TS debates

### 3.2.1 Debate on whether translation is a science or an art

As mentioned at the end of section 2, at least three major theoretical debates have occurred over the last thirty or more years, affecting as well as reflecting TS development in the Chinese academia. The first, which occurred early on in the 1980s and persisted in the 1990s and even the early 2000s, concerns the ‘science’ issue of translation. The following questions were recurrently asked and debated on in this respect: ‘Is translation a science or an art?’ and ‘Can translation studies be regarded as an independent academic (or ‘scientific’ for some scholars) discipline?’ The debate in its initial phase was well summarised by Lan in his article (1988) ‘科學與藝術之爭—翻譯研究方法論思考’ (Science vs. Art: Methodological Reflections on Translation Studies), in which he argued for a compromise between the two. However, in ‘必須建立翻譯學’ (The Necessity of Developing a Science of Translation), first delivered at the conference and then published in the *Chinese Translators Journal* in the same year of 1987, Tan argued that the study/theory of translation is a science (and a human science at that), hence the disciplinary name ‘翻譯學’ (translatable as ‘the science of translation’; cf. Tan 1987, 1997), and that ‘the practice of translation’ is not and cannot be a science, but a skill, a technology and an art. The argument is that, according to accepted definitions, a ‘science’ is ‘systematic and formulated knowledge’ or a ‘branch of knowledge (especially one that can be conducted on scientific principles), organized body of the knowledge that has been accumulated on a subject’ (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary, New Edition*), or ‘a system of knowledge about nature, society and thinking... and its tasks are to expose the objective laws of the development of things, to seek after the truth and to provide guidance to mankind in its efforts to transform the world’ (*辭海* or the Chinese Cihai Dictionary [Compact Edition], translated by author). As translation *per se* is not ‘[a system of] knowledge’, but only a process of action or the result of an action involving the manipulation of languages (the SL and the RL), it is obviously not a ‘science’. On the other hand, that subject which takes translation as its object of study or enquiry is and should be treated as a science, because its study and enquiry aims to ‘expose the objective laws’ about the process of translation, ‘seek after the truth’ about its phenomena and ‘provide guidance’ for solving its problems.

Whether owing to differences in understanding the two concepts, i.e. the study/theory and the practice of translation, or out of an earnest interest in deciphering the meaning of translation studies as an independent discipline, more papers came out on the Chinese TS arena later on in the 1990s through the early 2000s debating the ‘scientific’ or ‘non-scientific’ nature of translation and translation studies. Among the more sceptical and sometimes rather ‘belligerent’ were such articles as Lao’s ‘丟掉幻想，聯繫實踐—揭破「翻譯（科）學」的迷夢’ (Throw Away Illusions and Be Related to Practice: Breaking the Unrealisable Dream of the ‘Science of Translation’; 1996) and Zhang’s ‘翻譯學：一個未圓且難圓的夢’ (Translatology: An Unrealised and Unrealisable Dream; 1999), whereas those papers that defended or argued for the development of TS as an independent, ‘scientific’ or ‘academic’ discipline mainly included Chang’s ‘走出死胡同，建立翻譯學’ (Out of the Dead End and into Translation Studies; 1995), Liu’s ‘關於建立翻譯學的一些看法’ (Some Reflections on Developing a Translatology; 1995), Wang and Chu’s ‘翻譯學之我見’ (Our Views on Translatology; 1996), Han’s ‘翻譯學不是夢—兼與張經浩先生商榷’ (Translatology Is not a Dream – Some Different Reflections on Translatology – In Response to Zhang Jinghao’s Argument; 2000), He’s ‘翻譯學：歷史與邏輯的必然’ (Translatology: A Historical and

Logical Necessity of Translation Studies; 2000) and Hou's '翻譯為何不可為「學」?' (Why not Translatology [English title provided originally by author; for it to be clearer in meaning, I would rather have the original Chinese rendered as: "Why cannot we call it 'translatology'?]; 2000).

Currently, though the opponents cannot be categorically said to have been convinced of the proponents' arguments, a general consensus seems nonetheless to have been achieved in the Chinese academia on the disciplinary nature of TS. The broadly shared view among Chinese TS scholars today is that the study of translation has indeed grown into an academic discipline in its own right, regardless of whether it is 'scientific' or 'non-scientific' in nature, and that research efforts should no longer be focused on debating whether translation is a science or an art, but on how concretely TS can be developed (Tan 2000, 2012; Liu 2000; Zhu 2000, 2004; Xu 2003; Xu and Mu 2009).

### **3.2.2 Debate on the introduction of foreign translation theory**

The second debate was focused on whether the introduction of foreign, especially Western, thinking on translation is beneficial or detrimental to the development of the Chinese tradition. As pointed out in section 3.1 above, almost as soon as the post-Cultural Revolution import of foreign translation theory began in the early 1980s, there came resistance among some scholars against this import. The most recent and outspoken resistance was found in Zhang's 2006 article published in the *Chinese Translators Journal*. Under the title of '主次顛倒的翻譯研究和翻譯理論' (Misplaced Priorities in Translation Studies and Translation Theory), the article criticised the *Chinese Translators Journal* bitterly for publishing too much on Western translation theory, saying that Chinese translation theory would be overwhelmed by the "excessive import of Western ideas" (Zhang 2006: 59). Zhang's view was immediately challenged by counter-criticisms, the most notable in Chen's paper '冷靜看待中國翻譯研究現狀—兼與張經浩先生商榷' (The Current State of Translation Studies in China: A Rational Assessment – In Response to Zhang's View). Disagreeing with what Zhang said on the status quo of Chinese import of Western translation theory, Chen sees the positive effects that imported foreign (mainly Western) theories of translation have had on the modernisation of Chinese translation theory, saying that Zhang's opposition "would do more harm than good to the disciplinary construction of China's translation." (Chen 2007: 38)

### **3.2.3 Debate on the 'Chineseness' of Chinese translation theory**

The third debate in Chinese TS centred around the issue of 'Chineseness' in Chinese translation theory. The questions asked or heard asked on the issue, especially after Luo published his well-known *翻譯論集* (Anthology of Essays on Translation) in 1984 which carried his own essay as the introductory chapter of the book, i.e. '我國自成體系的翻譯理論' (Our Country's Translation Theory: A system of Its Own), were as follows: Is there 'translation theory' (or a 'system' of translation theory, in Luo's words) in the Chinese translation tradition? Is there a 'Chineseness' in Chinese translation theory or Chinese translation discourse? How can this 'Chineseness' be defined? Can this 'Chineseness' be purposely designed and built? and so on and so forth.

Various views have been found in response to these questions, which may be broadly grouped under three headings. The first, typically represented by Luo (1984), followed by Gui (1986), Liu (1989, 1993, 2005), Sun (1997), Zhang and Jiang (1997) and Zhang (2006), not only believes in the Chinese tradition having produced translation theory but also in its being a ‘fully developed theoretical system of its own’. Describable as ‘traditionalists’ and ‘conservatives’ (Tan 2009b: 285-286), scholars holding this view tended to be those who resisted the import of non-Chinese translation theory and those who were keen to emphasise the uniqueness of ‘Chinese features’ in the theorisation about translation in China.

The second view, in contrast, can be called ‘non-traditionalist’ and ‘generalist’ or, to borrow a term from Tan (2009: 283), ‘ethnoconvergent’. As discussed in Tan (1987, 1997, 2000, 2009b, 2012), Chang (1995, 2000) and Zhu (2000, 2004), this view differs from the first in that it points to the Chinese need to explore the general (or universally applicable) features of translation and translation theory, and does not emphasise (although it unequivocally recognises) the uniqueness of any theoretical tradition of translation, so that such uniqueness of any tradition will not be used as a pretext for rejecting ‘useful’ thoughts and ideas from other systems. As argued in Tan (2009b), the ‘Chineseness’ of Chinese translation theory, like the Englishness, Germanness, Frenchness and ‘Russianness’ of English, German, French and Russian translation theory respectively, should be regarded as a translational phenomenon that exists; it is not something to be deliberately designed or built – any artificial emphasis on the manufacturing of a uniqueness of translation theory, be it in the form of Sinocentrism or Eurocentrism or otherwise, will only be damaging rather than beneficial to the development of translation studies as a whole.

Sitting somewhere between these above positions is a third type of view, which can be described neither as ‘traditionalist’ in the sense of the first, nor ‘generalist’ in the sense of the second. This is the view best represented by Martha Cheung’s effort in replacing the term ‘Chinese translation theory’ with ‘Chinese discourse on translation’. Instead of entitling her English-language anthology (2006) *Chinese Translation Theory*, in the same way as Douglas Robinson called his anthology *Western Translation Theory* (1997), Cheung preferred using the word ‘discourse’ to ‘theory’ (or theories, etc.) in the title of her book, i.e. *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation Vol. 1 – From Earliest Times to the Buddhist Project*. For the same reason, her posthumous Vol. 2 (forthcoming in 2017) was also named *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation: From the Late Twelfth Century to 1800*.

Admittedly, by using ‘Chinese [translation] discourse’ to describe ‘Chinese [translation] theory’, Cheung successfully avoided treating Chinese theoretical thinking about translation as ‘theory’ in any reductive sense, in the sense that when interpreted by the standards of Western translation ‘theory’ Chinese translation ‘theory’ may not seem as forceful. However, as I see it, Cheung’s effort seems more to beg the question than to really solve the problem. In discussing the Chinese tradition of translation, it would not be an ideal solution to argue for either the exclusive use of ‘[Chinese translation] discourse’ or that of ‘[Chinese translation] theory’, but to argue for the use of both, because there exist both a Chinese tradition of studying and discussing translation [i.e. discourse] and a Chinese legacy of theoretical ideas about translation [i.e. theory]. In the context of Chinese thinking on translation – the same logic also applies to other contexts including the Western – it is meaningful to talk about there being both ‘Chinese translation discourse’ and ‘Chinese translation theory’. Whether one uses

the term of the former or that of the latter mainly has to do with perspective, or one's focus of discussion. Just as 'Chinese translation theory' matches well with 'Western translation theory', so does 'Chinese translation discourse' with 'Western translation discourse' (or any other types of translation discourse for that matter).

This said, it must nonetheless be re-affirmed that Cheung's preference of talking about '[Chinese translation] discourse' over '[Chinese translation] theory' did stand distinctly away from existing views. As such, it helped consolidate the efforts that had earlier begun (e.g. in Wong 1999 and then in Wang 2003) to 'reinterpret' or 'rediscover' what can be regarded as 'intrinsically' Chinese discourse on translation.

In sum, all the above TS developments and debates have undoubtedly contributed in their own ways to enhancing the theoretical awareness among Chinese scholars about translation and translation studies, and above all, to the coming to terms with the modern times of an age-old Chinese tradition of translation theory, a tradition of Chinese discourse on translation.

#### **4. THE DYNAMICS OF CHINESE TRANSLATION STUDIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

How then, against the backdrop of Western influence and a grown and yet still growing theoretical awareness in the Chinese academia, will translation studies be developing in China in the new millennium? This is an issue that Chinese TS scholars are particularly interested in and have time and again discussed at various TS conferences, symposia and colloquia that were held over recent years. Among the more important were '全國首屆翻譯學學科理論建設研討會' (First National Conference on TS Disciplinary Construction; 20-23 May 2004, Chengdu), '翻譯學學科建設高端論壇' (TS Disciplinary Construction Summit; 13-15 April 2012, Hangzhou) and '「外國語」翻譯理論研究及學科建設高層論壇' (The Journal of Foreign Languages Summit on TS Theories and Disciplinary Construction; 18-21 January 2014, Guangzhou). The reason why these were considered to be among the most important TS conferences was that they not only gathered together many of the country's most influential, front-line TS researchers to participate in them, but the views expressed at the conferences, especially those on the future directions of Chinese TS development, were also subsequently published in two of China's most important TS and foreign language studies journals, i.e. the *Chinese Translators Journal* (issues 2004:3, 2012:4) and the *Journal of Foreign Languages* (2014:4) respectively.

It would, of course, not be doing justice to other views appearing in the Chinese TS field to naively claim that the summary discussion below represents everybody's opinion on how Chinese scholars have been thinking in those conferences and post-conference publications about future Chinese TS development. However, at least insofar as the vision of this author allows, the following account hopes to give some idea, however personal, about what directions Chinese TS will likely be progressing towards in the years ahead (for a related discussion, see Tan 2012: 9; 2014: 4-5):

Firstly, Chinese TS development will continue to target at five of the most fundamental tasks in the new millennium, namely: (a) conducting more in-depth TS research that will lead to the publication of more original thinking on issues of translation and translation studies; (b) making continued efforts to improve the Chinese conceptual and terminological system

involving the making of Chinese TS tools such as TS dictionaries, TS encyclopaedia and TS handbooks; (c) exploring and opening up new Chinese TS topical areas so that the scope and territory of translation and translation studies will be constantly expanded and developed; (d) enhancing the training and education of Chinese TS talents; and (e) making further attempts through all channels to achieve broader societal recognition for the development of Chinese TS.

Secondly, Chinese TS will continue to direct attention at addressing five major relationships, namely the relationships between: (a) present research and past thinking on translation in the Chinese tradition; (b) the ‘particularist’ and the ‘universalist’ views on translation and translation studies; (c) positions on learning from the theoretical ‘Other’ vs. keeping to the theoretical ‘Self’; (d) the practice and the theory of translation; and (e) the art, technology and profession of translation and the academic/scientific discipline of translation studies.

And thirdly, in more specific terms, Chinese TS will continue to make innovative efforts around six sets of TS research themes, involving the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘who’, ‘why’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ issues about translation and translation studies. The following is but a selective account of these wh-questions that seem to have a more current bearing on Chinese TS: (a) What ontological configurations can be made of the nature of translation, with regard to such thinking as to whether to see translation as a prototypical category, or to see it as an act where the concept of ‘accuracy’/ ‘faithfulness’/‘equivalence’ is no longer important? (b) How do Chinese translators and TS scholars see the importance of integrating translation theory with translation practice? How, in Chinese-language contexts, can translation/interpreting be taught? How can or should TS degree programmes be operated? (c) Who, according to Chinese TS theories, can or should be considered to be the stakeholders of given translation projects? (d) Why should a translation read like *the* original? Why should a translation read like *an* original? Why is a translation never an identical copy of the source text? Why can translators be said to be painters, photographers, mediators, traitors, etc.? (e) Where do worthy translation projects come from? Where do finished translation products go? f) When, insofar as Chinese-contexts are concerned, does the need to translate arise? When does translation become more important than original writing? When is there the call for non-conventional translation (i.e. e-translation or machine translation)? And when is there the need to start studying translation, and so on?

Obviously, these have all along been challenging and important issues and themes to Chinese TS in the past, and they will likely remain so in the future. In a sense, they constitute important topical areas where continued, solid research efforts will likely lead on to even greater advances in the Chinese TS field. This is especially true against the backdrop of China’s rapid economic growth in more recent years and the country’s ambitious institutional planning for outbound strategic cultural initiatives, including the implementation of its Culture Development Programme during the National 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan Period (中國文化走出去戰略) that began in 2011. In the implementation of this initiative, the translation of Chinese-language materials into foreign languages (mainly English) plays a pivotal role, and this ranges from the translation of cultural to non-cultural products such as Chinese literature (i.e. classical, modern and contemporary works, poetry, fiction, folk opera, etc.) and traditional Chinese medicine, and from translation by the human hand to that done by machine.

In many ways, the aforesaid issues and themes, together with these above-described new strategic cultural initiatives, well reflect the dynamics not only of a vigorously developing Chinese TS today, but also of a Chinese TS under the new conditions of a challenging but very promising tomorrow.

## RELATED TOPICS

- The Chinese tradition of translation studies: review, reconstruction and modernization (Chunshen Zhu)
- Global Chinese translation programmes (Yong Zhong)
- Western and Chinese translation: impact, synergy, prospect (Chang Nam Fung)

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## FURTHER READING

Bassnett, Susan (2002) *Translation Studies* (3rd Edition). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Explanatory note: This is one of the classics on approaching translation studies as a separate (in the sense of 'independent') academic discipline, and is well-known as such to the Chinese TS academia.

Malmkjær, Kirsten (2005) *Linguistics and the Language of Translation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Explanatory note: Chapter 2 'Mapping and Approaching Translation Studies' is a particularly important work for understanding the development of the discipline.

Munday, Jeremy (2016) *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. (4th edition). London; New York: Routledge.

Explanatory note: This is an important TS textbook in English.

Venuti, Lawrence (ed.) (2004) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London/New York: Routledge.

Explanatory note: This TS reader contains writings on translation and translation studies by some of the most important figures (mainly Western) from 1900s through the 1990s.

Luo, Xinzhang 羅新璋 and Chen Yingnian 陳應年 (2009) *翻譯論集 (修訂本)* (An Anthology of Essays on Translation. Revised Edition). Beijing: The Commercial Press.

Explanatory note: This is one of the most important Chinese-language anthologies of Chinese discourse on translation, a must-read for Chinese TS researchers.