

Book Review

50 Years Later. What Have We Learnt after Holmes (1972) and Where Are We Now?

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In 1972, James S. Holmes (1924-1986) presented his seminal paper, “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,” at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Copenhagen. The paper defines the scope and structure of Translation Studies (TS) and is widely considered the “founding statement of the discipline” (Gentzler 2001: 93). Since Holmes’ paper, TS has developed over five decades and grown into a diverse field with various approaches and paradigms. However, there remain debates on the boundaries, methodologies, and even core identity of TS (van Doorslaer 2019). This evolving complexity highlights the need for a fresh examination of TS to guide researchers and students through this labyrinth. In response, this modest 200-page book has been released, serving both as a tribute to Holmes and a comprehensive overview of the current state of TS (p. 8).

The book has seven chapters. The first two chapters provide a broad overview of TS’ evolution since Holmes’ paper, while the remaining chapters delve into the latest development in specific areas. Chapter One reviews the development of TS over the past 50 years. Drawing on two TS-specific bibliographic databases, Translation Studies Bibliography and Bibliography of Interpreting & Translation, it identifies key trends and emerging topics in translation research. For instance, there is a steady growth in literary translation research despite the declining interest in

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translations of classical and religious texts (pp. 19-20). Some emergent research topics include audiovisual translation, gender, ideology, postcolonial issues, and corpus studies (p. 21). The changes in academic publishing are also highlighted, such as the rise of open science movement, higher rankings for TS journals, increased visibility of female translation researchers, and greater research impact (pp. 25-31).

Chapter Two explores Holmes' influence on TS, particularly in the development of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). Authored by José Lambert, the chapter reflects on Holmes' role as a pioneer who legitimized TS as an academic field and introduced the DTS paradigm. Lambert comments that Holmes' distinctions between production, product and reception challenged the source-oriented notions dominant among literary and linguistic scholars in the 1970s. He also notes that during the Literature and Translation Symposium at KU Leuven in 1976, a conceptual shift from "literary translation" to "translated literature" was initiated, which marked a transition to the target-oriented perspective in TS (p. 45). Lambert concludes by outlining key milestones in the development of TS, including the launch of the first translation journal, *Target* (1989), the release of Benjamins Translation Library series (1994), and the founding of the European Society for Translation Studies (1992). All these initiatives have solidified the institutionalization of TS as a standalone discipline.

The following chapters explore the latest development in specialized areas. Chapter Three traces the evolution of process-oriented translation studies, from the "black box" of Holmes era to the present Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies (CTIS). It first examines two key concepts in CTIS, i.e., "competence" and "expertise," and then introduces methodological advancements, such as think-aloud protocols, eye-tracking, and fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging). As its authors Martín and García comment, TS is at large "a body with two hearts," one rooted in the humanities, and the other in scientific methods (p. 83). CTIS seems ready to fulfill its role in the disciplinary scheme laid out by Holmes, constituting an essential part of empirical TS based on scientific methods. That said, it seems that the two authors of the chapter have downplayed the role of DTS, presuming

that it was “short-lived” and quickly “yielded to a cultural turn” (p. 75). This claim conflicts with Lambert’s earlier argument, and DTS has in fact laid a solid foundation for the development of cultural turn. Even today, many research sub-fields in TS, including translation history and translation sociology, still benefit from Holmes and Toury’s vision.

Chapter Four examines the role of translation technology. As its author O’Brien comments, translation technology is “no longer a dark horse,” but “an essential component of modern-day translation” (p. 101). O’Brien highlights the increasing symbiosis between human translators and machines. This perhaps would also prompt the pressing question of whether humans or machines will dominate in the age of AI (artificial intelligence). As for the position of translation technology on Holmes’ map, O’Brien questions the meaning of such mapping as it struggles to keep pace with the rapidly evolving technological world.

Chapter Five focuses on translator education. The chapter’s author Massey suggests that over the past decades, the teacher-centered teaching gradually shifted towards situated learning and social constructivist teaching model. Such translation/translator competence models as the competence-oriented tasking and collaborative experiential learning have been developed and adopted, with technology playing an increasingly prominent role. Further, Massey draws attention to the need to facilitate collaboration between translation education and Additional Language Learning. In fact, in Holmes’ disciplinary map, Holmes already hinted that a huge topic awaiting exploration is how to assess or define the role of translating in language education, which has not been sufficiently addressed in the previous work (Holmes 1988: 78).

Chapter Six offers a mirror map of Interpreting Studies (IS) based on Holmes’ TS framework. While interpreting is under the medium-restricted translation theories in Holmes’ map, translation and interpreting are “fraternal twins” and “two sides of the same coin (T + I = T&I)” (Pöchhacker 1995: 31). The chapter demonstrates the growth of IS into a robust field (p. 152). For example, its research areas have been expanding, encompassing new research directions not foreseen in Holmes’ map (e.g., signed language and non-professional interpreting). Some key moments

in IS history have also been highlighted, including the advancement of cognitive model by Gile in the 1990s, the branching out to public service interpreting in the 2000s, and the growing focus on digital technology in the 2010s (pp. 149-150). In summary, despite a marginal role in Holmes' map, IS has taken a quantum leap over the past years, establishing itself as "a multi-paradigmatic object of study in its own right" (p. 152).

The book concludes with a chapter on functionalism by van Vaerenbergh. She mainly focuses on three functionalist theories: Reiß and Vermeer's *skopos* theory, Holz-Mänttari's translatorial action theory, and Nord's function *plus* loyalty model. Key constructs within functionalist approaches like *skopos*, *translatum*, adequacy, and loyalty are also elaborated. Although van Vaerenbergh suggests that functionalism would lay a groundwork for a general translation theory, it remains debatable to claim that functionalism could be a "general" and even "complete" theory applicable to all cases of translation (p. 167). For example, functional theories may not be applicable to literary texts, as they are often considered to have no specific purpose or to be stylistically more complex (Ma and Miao 2009: 83).

In conclusion, this book provides a comprehensive overview of TS since Holmes' 1972 paper, highlighting key areas of growth. This reflective examination on Holmes' legacy is meaningful, although the broad scope of the book would naturally omit certain areas and perspectives. As evident through its content, the book focuses more on the applied or practical aspects of TS, with almost half of its chapters focusing on translation technology, translation education or interpreting studies. To achieve a more balanced representation of TS sub-areas, additional chapters on the theoretical development would significantly augment the volume. As translation borders on many provinces, focusing on the wider picture and investigating how translation intersects with other disciplines would be both interesting and insightful. We suggest that adding discussions on emergent interdisciplinary topics, such as translation sociology (e.g., Tyulenev 2014), translation ethics (e.g., Lambert 2023), translation ecology (e.g., Cronin 2017), and translation (bio)semiotics (e.g., Kobus 2019) would greatly enhance the book.

Further, as Holmes (1988) emphasizes, “translation history” is an area that deserves special attention and awaits further exploration. However, translation history is rarely discussed in this book. We believe that translation history research holds significant value and “being unable to draw upon past experiences, the discipline may fail to claim a future” (Zhao and Ma 2019: 113). A book deserving a special note here is *Translators through History*, a result of joint efforts of over 70 scholars and translators from about 20 countries. This internationally collaborative project has two main objectives: first, to bring translators of ancient and recent past out of oblivion; second, to illustrate the roles translators have played in the evolution of human thought (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012: xx). In *Method in Translation History*, Pym (1988) also calls for greater concentration on the translator, which is an important move in methodological innovation.

Finally, while we complement Holmes’ vision, attempts to modify Holmes’ map (e.g., van Doorslaer 2007; Vandepitte 2008; Munday and Vasserman 2022) also deserve attention. In a nutshell, this book also represents a further evolution of Holmes’ framework, and a fitting homage to the thinking of a man, whose legacy on TS will continue to inspire future generations.

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