

Introduction: Interdisciplinarity and Translation Studies

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Interdisciplinarity has been a constant topic of discussion in Translation Studies (TS) since the emergence of the field in the 1970s, with reference to its polydisciplinary origins and the conditions of its independent evolution. However, only in the late 1980s and in the 1990s has academic debate focused explicitly on interdisciplinary approaches in the context of particular domains of translation and interpreting, putting forward solid arguments for the conceptualization of Translation Studies TS as an interdiscipline (Snell-Hornby, 1988; Kaindl, Pöchhacker & Snell-Hornby, 1994; Kaindl, 1995 and 1997; Kurz, 1995 and 1997; Wills, 1999). Such developments coincided with dominant interdisciplinary trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) (Graf, 2016), and given the increasing consolidation of TS autonomy, an intense debate commenced addressing such issues as the (inter)disciplinary nature of TS as a field, its internal structure and organization, and its relations to other disciplines and interdisciplines.

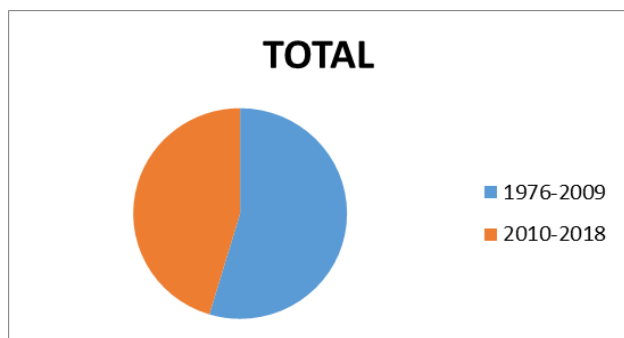
Such a debate continued unabated in the first decade of the millennium, with several publications focusing on definitions of interdisciplinarity, in its various forms, in TS as well as pertinent applications (Kaindl, 2004; Chesterman, 2005; Gambier, 2006 and 2007; Brownlie, 2008). This ever-growing number of related contributions has led recently to a real ‘interdisciplinary boom’: in the course of the past ten years, interdisciplinarity has become a “buzzword” in TS academic discourse, as Gambier points out in his article in the current issue, a statement confirmed by quantitative data from Translation Studies Bibliography (TSB), which we retrieved in order to further substantiate this assumption.

In TSB, the interdisciplinary status of T/I [Translation and Interpreting] Studies is clearly foregrounded: “Because of the interdisciplinary nature of T/I studies, the TSB considers publications from other disciplines (such as semiotic studies, communication studies, linguistics, sociology, psychology, etc.) but only to the extent in which they are relevant and of interest to T/I studies.” (Introduction). Furthermore, in the TSB Thesaurus, interdisciplinarity is interconnected with multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity and pluridisciplinarity (interdisciplinarity =multi-=trans-=pluri-), thus permitting a combined (re)search for all the range of the interdisciplinarity variants.

We performed a search with the keyword “interdisciplinar*”, covering both the noun and the adjective, and a second search with the same keyword in titles only – presuming that the term’s presence in titles may reflect its increased importance for TS. Finally, we searched with the keyword “*discipline”; the latter query rendered mainly records for “discipline” and only 3 records for “interdiscipline”, and in titles only – plus a related review. It is not a coincidence, however, that the first records of interdisciplinar* in full text go back to 1976, whilst in papers’ titles only back to 1987. This search focuses on the metadata of such texts and especially their accompanying abstracts. As was pointed out by Hartama-Heinonen, who performed a similar query using the entire database for her research (2011: 4), such a search in essence reflects how authors or the TSB team construe interdisciplinarity, especially

in the case of older entries, which may be based on an understanding of the concept through a prism of more contemporary views. The above limitations notwithstanding, an overview of shifts such as the ones provided here point to a perceptible change in academic discourse *vis-à-vis* interdisciplinarity.

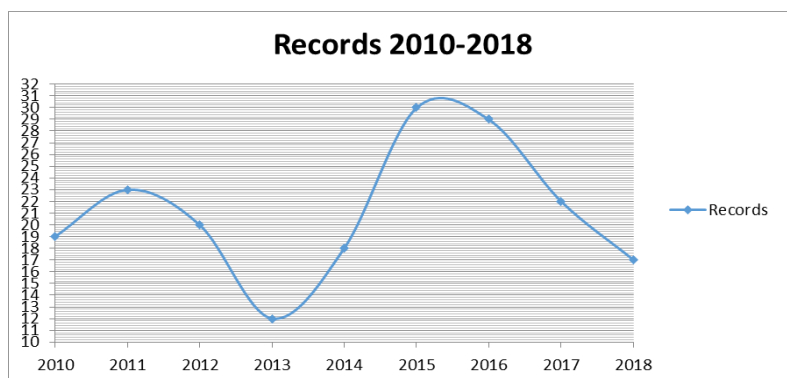
When searching for “interdisciplinary*”, the database yields 419 results in total, with the first instance appearing in 1976. Interestingly, 190 of the results (or 45%) appear in the 2010s. In what follows, we will present a graph that represents this faultline in pre- and post-2010 entries. This is followed by a table and chart with a more detailed breakdown of numbers per year for the period with this observed spike in the use of the terms.



Graph 1. Records’ distribution for “interdisciplinary*”, 1976-2009 and 2010-2018

<i>Year</i>	<i>Records</i>
2010	19
2011	23
2012	20
2013	12
2014	18
2015	30
2016	19
2017	22
2018	17

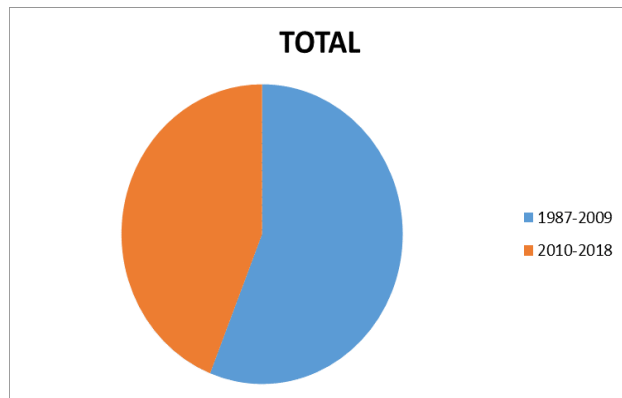
Table 1. Full search for “interdisciplinary*”. Records by year (2010-2018)



Graph 2. Full search for “interdisciplinary*”. Records by year (2010-2018)

As can be seen here, the trend reaches its highest point in the middle of the decade and then gradually subsides.

When searching for “interdisciplinary*” in titles, the database yields 116 results in total, with the first instance appearing in 1987. Usage over the years echoes usage observed in the abstracts shown above, with 51 records (or 44%) appearing in the 2010s. This marked increase is presented in a pie chart with pre- and post-2010s records. As a above, in order to offer more nuance vis-à-vis this marked increase, we provide a table and chart with a breakdown of numbers per year for the 2010s.

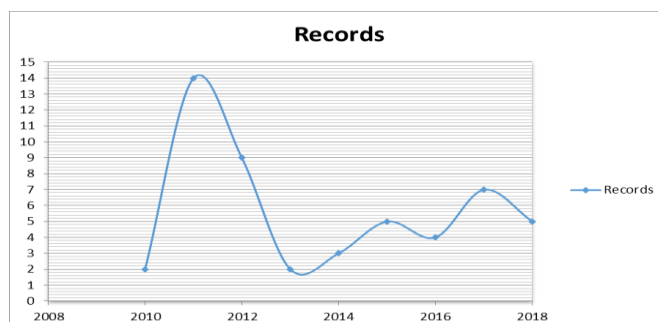


Graph 3. Records' distribution for “interdisciplinary*”, 1987-2009 and 2010-2018

The fact that the trend reaches its peak already in 2011, possibly indicates an important turn in the study of interdisciplinarity, and the subsequent interdisciplinary boom. Their distribution and fluctuation by year is presented in the Table 2 and Graph 3 below.

Year	Records
2010	2
2011	14
2012	9
2013	2
2014	3
2015	5
2016	4
2017	7
2018	5

Table 2. Search by “interdisciplinary*” in titles. Records by year (2010-2018)



Graph 3. Search for “interdisciplinary*” in papers' titles. Records by year (2010-2018)

These data confirm the strong presence of interdisciplinarity's terminology in TS academic discourse. Yet, they remain merely indicative of a general and even unclear trend, as only qualitative analysis could yield reliable evidence on the impact of the concept and practice on the field, the epistemological status of the term, relevant interdisciplinary research, or on scholars' attitudes towards the issue of interdisciplinarity. What can be said at this juncture, however is that turns are not an exclusive TS phenomenon; to echo William Condee, who comments on the interdisciplinary turn in the Humanities: "In a sense, we are like Molière's (1989) *Would-Be Gentlemen*: In the course of learning about literature, he is surprised and delighted to learn that he has been speaking prose all his life (p. 281). We are all interdisciplinarians now. The danger, however, is that if everything and everyone are interdisciplinary, then the term is defined out of existence." (2016: 13).

In point of fact, a closer look also reveals that in TS, as in the Humanities and Social Sciences more generally, "commentators disagree about whether this trend is positive or negative" and "about what they mean by "interdisciplinary." (Graf, 2016, p. 775). In TS, the term 'interdisciplinarity' tends to prevail over its variants, ranging from polydisciplinarity and multidisciplinary to interdisciplinarity, cross-disciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (here one may also add that since the beginning of the 2010s, there is even discussion of the status of TS as a post-discipline; see Nergaard & Arduini, 2011 and Gentzler, 2014). It is also interesting that in two consecutive editions of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker, 1988; Baker and Saldanha, 2009), *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (Munday, 2009) and *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (Malmkjær and Windle, 2012) there is no dedicated entry on interdisciplinarity. It does appear, however, in the third volume of *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2012). Despite this general trend, confirmed by the TSB data, terminological indeterminacy remains unresolved and reflects the different perceptions of the concept and its practical use and application. Such a polyphony with respect to interdisciplinarity comes with a distinct disadvantage, or paradox. On the one hand, it is a desirable attribute that points to originality and the extendibility of conceptual tools from other areas; indeed, many scholars highlight its necessity and importance for the further development of the discipline. On other hand, and precisely because it is so widely used, there is no consensus, leading scholars to often voice a strong criticism of its current perception and application.

The criticism levelled at interdisciplinarity is mainly threefold. Firstly, interdisciplinarity may consist in a simple borrowing of concepts, theories or terminology from other disciplines, without an in-depth knowledge of the background they are rooted in, which can put in risk the accuracy and effectiveness of the research (Chesterman, 2005; Gambier, 2006 and 2007; Lambert, 2012 and 2013; Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2016). As Lambert accurately notices: "If we don't ask ourselves about the status of our terms (and our discourses), we often don't know where our proper discourse leads us into (2013: 257, our translation).

Secondly, and following from the above-mentioned weakness, many papers tackle the lack of integrative and innovative approaches, which should deal with major questions of the modern, globalised and digitized world; for example, it remains surprising that despite all proclamations of the omnipotence of image in the digital world, "'text' has been, and still is, the word to rule them all and in the darkness bind them" (McGann, 2004:198). Taking this argument further, TS are particularly well placed to "redefine the concept of 'language', showing that 'translation' is continuously active in the evolution of languages, as well as the dynamics established

among languages [...] within EU, in the economic and political spheres, languages change under the influence of the *lingua franca* or of the translated discourse” (Lambert, 2013: 258, our translation). The dominant position of English, multilingualism in transcultural societies, the new, multimodal discourses of the digital media and communities, the challenge of intermediality are, among many others, some issues of major interest for TS, which should be addressed with solid interdisciplinary synergies (Lambert, 2012 and 2013; Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2016).

Thirdly, many scholars point out the lack of a deep and integrative reflection on the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline, in a tug-of-war between fragmentation and consilience (Chesterman 2005); precisely because of this tension, “‘translation’ is part of the vocabulary of most academic disciplines” but at the same time TS and their theories on translation are invisible for almost all other disciplines (Lambert, 2013: 249). As a recent call for papers states: “Translation, by nature, deals with margins. Translators and interpreters still hold a marginal position in society, as they often work in the shadow, and go unseen, despite the fact that global economy and politics hinge on their work. Translation Studies (TS) holds a similar position in the Humanities and the Social Sciences”.¹ TS scholars are often left to wonder, in the margins of these fields, what alternative paths of development other disciplines may have/might have had with the input of TS (think of adaptation studies, anthropology, economics, tourism studies or historiography with TS-generated insights injected into them).

The threefold criticism of interdisciplinarity addressed above is not intended to condemn interdisciplinarity in TS as such; instead, it is aimed at foregrounding the potential of interdisciplinarity to serve as a motor of change. Of course, as Hartama-Heinonen stresses, referring to Juri Lotman’s centre-periphery model and the continuous cross-boundary movement between them, “no one can predict how the boundaries move or how the emphasis between the centre and the periphery changes, nor how strong the disciplinary gatekeepers will be” (2011: 10). Further development, institutionalization and internationalization in TS are not determined only by the internal evolution of the field of TS, but also by the academic and broader scientific and cultural environment and its constraints, the relevant national and transnational policies or the players’ attitudes in the field of knowledge and the actual socio-political issues at play (Gambier, 2018). Overall, interdisciplinarity seems to be a well-placed approach for dealing with the major challenges of our world by placing an integrative perspective at the very centre of intellectual and scientific pursuits.

This issue aims at generating traction with respect to the above debate. The papers included in it suggest potential responses to some of the issues that have arisen in the context of interdisciplinary research in TS, and they show that its further development can embrace different perspectives by moving in different directions.

The issue is opened by Yves Gambier. In his article, “*Traductologie et médias : les défis de l’interdisciplinarité*”, he discusses the epistemological status of Translation Studies – under the French label *traductologie* –, in connection with interdisciplinarity in all its variants, also bearing in mind the internationalization and institutionalization of the (inter)discipline. He highlights the fluid and ever-changing nature of disciplines

¹ Tenth Annual International Translation Conference Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII) College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar, March 26th – 27th, 2019.

and their boundaries from a historical and socio-cultural point of view and he examines the status of TS vis-à-vis the labels used to identify the field in different languages; such different labelling conventions reflect different conceptualizations of the discipline; the types of 'turns' which marked their development since the beginning and the perceptions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity they convey; the connection of the names and turns with the internationalization of the field, also interrelated with its institutionalization. Using concrete evidence and taking media as a case study, Gambier discusses the shortcomings of the current approaches of interdisciplinarity in TS, the internal fragmentation of the field and the constraints imposed by the academic and socio-cultural environment to its discourses and practices, suggesting innovative perspectives in the conception and practice of interdisciplinary research.

In his contribution entitled "*Intersemiotic explicitation of non-verbals in amateur subtitling*", George Damaskinidis discusses, from a semiotic point of view, the practice of amateur subtitling and its differences from professional subtitling. Damaskinidis delineates the difference between fansubbing, the dominant term for amateur subtitling, and an arguably more suitable terminological choice, funsubbing, subtitling not only by fans but also for fun; he then discusses the semiotic complexity of AVT and underlines the importance of non-verbal semiotic elements that convey covert information for relaying meaning and cultural complexity in film. Damaskinidis transfers Kussmaul's 'frame-and-scene theory' to funsubbing, and shows how non-verbal elements enhance, through post-visualization, the creativity of funsubbers in the wording of the subtitles. As is argued, the creativity deployed in funsubbing can and often does introduce a new, holistic approach of translation in AVT.

In her paper, "*An interdisciplinary approach to studying linguistic variation in audiovisual texts: extrapolating a synergy of Neuropsychology, Semiotics, Performativity, and Memetics to Translation Studies*", Lydia Hayes studies the construction of linguistic and cultural identities through accents and dialects and their cross-cultural perception in AVT, within a complex interdisciplinary framework. Conceptualizing accent as a meme and accented utterances as a performative speech act, which is realised at the speaker-listener interface and is conveying cultural identity, Hayes explores accent and dialect rendition issues in dubbing, where sociolects and dialects tend to be standardized. She considers and evaluates the various strategies, which are or can be used to foreground the cultural difference through accents and dialects in AVT, and she suggests practical approaches for the translators and dubbing directors, as well as new directions for the AVT research, through the application of memetic-performative frameworks to audiovisual-translation case studies on linguistic variation.

Tiffane Levick, in her contribution "*Performing (Re)Writing: Moving Through Modes of Textual Engagement*", integrates the concepts of foreignization and domestication, as formulated by Lawrence Venuti and used in TS, within a theoretical frame based on theatre and literary studies. In the model she creates, the act of translation is conceived both as a form of performance and a type of writing. Focusing on the youth slang of the banlieue parisienne in a coming-of-age novel, she aligns Brecht's theory of estrangement with foreignization and shock, and Stanislavsky's System with domestication and enchantment; this is done, in order to consider the impact of textual choices - concerning and conveying sociolinguistic and cultural alterity in the writing and translating process - on audience response. She further explores the question of the limits of transcribing slang in the written fictional text

and its subsequent translation, in connection with the readers' perceptions and attitudes.

Kobus Marais' contribution entitled "*Translation complex rather than translation turns?: considering the complexity of translation*", is mainly inspired by Peircean semiotics and complexity theory. Drawing on these two areas, he first argues for the conceptualisation of interlingual translation as a semiotic process of meaning-making and meaning-taking, a non-linear, non-binary, recursive, non-predictable process, subject to both initial and boundary conditions, which, from the particular point of view of the dissipative systems and infodynamics, may explain the emergence or development of the society. Secondly, he presents a different perspective of the TS field, by defining various 'turns' as complementary perspectives that contribute to a fuller understanding of the complexity of translation. Thirdly, in an original interdisciplinary synergy, he explores how modelling can be used to render/understand complexity, by employing a four-dimension model of translation with moving animations.

Fabio Regattin's article, "*Biologiser les idées ? Traduction et darwinisme culturel: rapports, apports, passé, future*", uses evolution theory as an explanatory tool for the development and enrichment of TS and as an indicator of links between TS and other fields, namely, the field of cultural evolution studies. Regattin explores existing literature in search of links between cultural and translation theory, mainly through memetics. He conceptualizes translation as a prototypic form of cultural evolution, as far as she permits the circulation of ideas outside the system in which they were born, and identifies in it the biological and cultural process "multiplication-selection-heredity-variation", in line with approaches of translation semiosis in evolutionary terms. He finally argues for the further investigation of possible synergies between biological and cultural evolutionary theories and semiotics (which already share a common ground), and their link to translation theory; such a link not only indicates how synergies can be enriched, but also underscore the role of translation theory in enhancing the consilience and visibility of TS within existing epistemological synergies.

By way of concluding this introduction, we shall make an observation that may partly constitute reflection on the contributions to this issue, but which is nevertheless worth pointing out: semiotics is overtly or covertly present in most articles of this issue and serves as the main vector of interdisciplinary research in at least half of them. The synergy between semiotics and translation studies is demonstrably fruitful on a theoretical, methodological as well as practical levels and it is precisely such a synergy that may point the way to further interdisciplinary dialogue in the future.

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