

ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE STUDIES OF TRANSLATOLOGICAL DICTIONARIES

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Abstract This article will talk about some characteristics of translatology, which can endow translatological dictionaries (TD) with existential values. The existence of TD is ontologically determined by the integration of translatology and lexicography, which defines the nature or identity of TD. In terms of the studies of translatological dictionaries (STD), this article will mainly discuss the nature, structure, typology, principle of compilation, function and criticism of TD. With its unique research object, research method and theoretical framework, STD can become an independent research area under the discipline of translatology.

Keywords translatology, lexicography, translatological dictionaries (TD), studies of translatological dictionaries (STD), ontology

Introduction

Dictionary compilation is part of cultural activities, leaving behind a long history. In this respect, Hartmann remarked:

In Europe, the lexicographic tradition goes back to early Greek glossaries in the fifth pre-Christian century, in Mesopotamia, southern India and China even further. (Hartmann 2005: 6)

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But for a long time, the dictionary making had escaped from the academic research. In the 18th century in the west, lexicographers began to talk about the quality of dictionaries, and the case in China is much later, as is pointed out by LI Er-gang. He remarked as follows:

In China, it was almost vacant in dictionary theories before 1970s, and therefore, there was no talk about the characteristics of dictionaries. In 1979, *ci-hai* (辞海), a grand comprehensive dictionary, was published, which embodied the painstaking effort and wisdom of scholars of a new generation. In summing up their experience of compilation, scholars began to generalize the lawful knowledge about dictionaries. (LI Er-gang 2002: 1)

Comparatively, the translatological dictionaries are even younger, with a brief history of more than two decades. Therefore, the studies of translatological dictionaries (STD) are too young to arouse enough attention from scholars. As a matter of fact, translatological dictionaries are produced ontologically from the integration of translation theories and lexicographical ones. Theoretically, the emergence of influential translatological dictionaries can well represent the maturity and independence of translation studies as a discipline. The year of 1988 met the first publication of a translatological dictionary—*A Dictionary of Chinese Translators*. After that, there appeared about 20 translatological dictionaries in the world, among which 4 are generally considered as the most important in China. These four dictionaries are *A Companion for Chinese Translators* (1997) compiled by LIN Huang-tian, *Aspects of Translation* (1999) by SUN Ying-chun, *Dictionary of Translation Studies*(1997) by Mark Shuttleworth & Moira Cowie and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1998) by Mona Baker.

To probe into the compilation theories of translatological dictionaries, in 2001, SUN Ying-chun wrote an article of “A Brief Exposition on the Compilation of Comprehensive Dictionaries of Translatology” published

by Shandong Foreign Languages Journal, which pioneered the STD. From then on, many Chinese scholars have gone in for the STD, dealing with the translatological dictionaries in terms of the nature, methodology, typology, structure, function, criticism and so forth. Ontologically, we can say that STD aims at systematically dealing with the translatological knowledge by means of the form of dictionaries.

Actually, we can conduct the studies of translation from various perspectives, since the studies of translation are open in nature. Gideon Toury once said:

Each of these question areas is legitimate, as well as interesting; and each one of us may choose an area to his or her own liking. Still, it should be realized that they belong to different domains of Translation Studies, and it simply won't do to mix them all in one neutral, or neutralizing bag. (Anderman & Rogers 2006:18)

Actually, there should be various schools of scholars in translation studies, some turning to descriptive studies, some explanatory, and some normative. STD should be regarded as one of these various schools.

Characteristics of Translatology

In the essay of "Toward a Theory of Translating", I.A. Richards remarked that the translation process "may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos". Peter Newmark also thought that the nature of translation "is difficult to define." (Anderman & Rogers 2006:23) Mona Baker did not offer a definition of translation in her *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. In the *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie formulated an entry of translation, which argues that translation is "an incredible broad notion which can be understood in many different ways."(Shuttleworth & Cowie 2004:181) It is a fact that "Translation

Studies contains many different and often conflicting perceptions, insights and beliefs” (Shuttleworth & Cowie 2004: ix) Many experts of translation, ancient or modern, have tried to describe the nature of translation, but none turned to be exclusively authoritative. The nature of translation is so diverse and complicated that Translation Studies had been considered groundless for a long time, though the activity of translation is as old as human civilization.

In 1972, James Holmes argued in his article of “The name and Nature of Translation Studies” that “translation studies” should be the standard term for the discipline as a whole. He even put forward a framework of translation studies, which says that translation studies consists of pure and applied translation studies, with the former containing theoretical and descriptive studies and the latter containing translator training, translation aids and translation criticism. From then on, translation studies tended to be an academic field in its own right. “In that sense Holmes’s ‘Name and Nature’ constitutes translation studies’ declaration of independence.” (Theo Hermans 2004:30) In 1976, a conference was held in Leuven, Belgium, where translation studies as an autonomous discipline was acknowledged by most scholars, such as Bassnett and Lefevere. Translation Studies should be dealt with from multidisciplinary perspectives. Shuttleworth once said as follows:

Translation can be seen as a point of intersection between many different academic subjects; it is an area in which many other disciplines have legitimately expressed an interest, and conversely one which has provided its own experts with insights which can profitably be shared elsewhere. (Shuttleworth & Cowie 2004: v)

Translation studies will inevitably go beyond the confines of any particular discipline, as it has formed its own research objects, research methods and theoretical systems. The methodologies and theories borrowed from other disciplines have been adapted to meet the demands

of translation studies, so translatology is doomed to have its own characteristics.

Multidimensional property

Translation is traditionally thought as the replacement of the source language by the target language. This, however, is a kind of unidirectional thought, ignoring the multidimensional factors involved in the process of translation. Faced with the multidimensional and complicated nature of translation, Peter Newmark argued:

There are no cast-iron rules. Everything is more or less. There is an assumption of ‘normally’ or ‘usually’ or ‘commonly’ behind each well-established principle, as I have stated earlier, qualifications such as ‘always’, ‘never’, ‘must’ do not exist—there are no absolutes. (Peter Newmark 2001: 21)

Newmark suggests that every principle in translation may be relatively right. Different dimension may demand different desideratum. Eugene A. Nida once classified translation theories into three types: translation theories based on philosophical insights; translation theories based on linguistic insights; translation theories based on sociosemiotics. (E.A. Nida 2001: 116-120) Philosophy has constituted the primary basis for discussions of translation theories and practice for about two thousand years, as it is a kind of studies of written texts. In terms of the sociosemiotics, Nida remarks that it deals with all types of signs and codes, and especially with language as the most comprehensive and complex of all the systems of signs which humans employ. No holistic approach to translating, Nida insists, can exclude semiotics as a fundamental discipline in encoding and decoding signs.

The linguistic school of translation studies takes “equivalence” as a paradigm, dealing with translation as “science”. With the development of

translation theory and practice, the linguistic perspective can not satisfy the various conditions of translation. Interdisciplinary conduct of translation is inevitably turned to. Mona Baker described as follows:

In the 1970s, and particularly during the 1980s, translation scholars began to draw more heavily on theoretical frameworks and methodologies borrowed from other disciplines, including psychology, communication theory, literary theory, anthropology, philosophy and, more recently, cultural studies. (Mona Baker 2004: 279)

From 1980s, there have appeared more dimensions in translation studies, such as the relevance theory by Gutt, skopos theory by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, descriptive studies by Gideon Toury, polysystem theory by Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, corpus-based translation studies by Mona Baker and so on. No one can say that all the dimensions about translation have been done once for all. Translatological dictionary, which is existentially meaningful, is just a new dimension to translation studies.

Systematic property

Within translation studies, the method of descriptive studies is not all. We have to formulate a set of terms particular to translatology itself. These terms should be in turn organized systematically into translation theories, which are used to describe, settle, or prescribe the translation activities, translation problems or translation research. Without systematic terms and theories, the independence of translatology will be out of the question. With these systematic theories, we can set up the framework of Translation Studies and foretell the possible trend in the future. James Holmes set a good model in systematizing the translation studies, as Mona Baker remarked:

Holmes stresses that the relationship between theoretical, descriptive and applied translation studies is dialectical rather than unidirectional, with each branch both providing insights for and using insights from the other two. (Mona Baker 2004: 279)

Holmes's systematic theory about translation is far reaching. Many translation theorists got their inspiration from it, as is pointed out by Mona Baker as follows:

James Holmes is credited with the first attempt to chart the territory of translation studies as an academic pursuit. His map of the discipline is now widely accepted as a solid framework for organizing academic activities within this domain. (Mona Baker 2004: 277)

Following Holmes, Gideon Toury divided Translation Studies into two main branches, one "Pure", the other "Applied". Like Holmes, Toury subdivided "Applied extensions" into "Translator training", "Translation aids" and "Translation criticism". In order to better study the systems in translology, the concept of "norm" should be employed in systematizing the translation theories. Without norms, there would be no systems; without systems, no autonomy of translology.

The concept of system can be very flexible in meaning. It can refer to the structural systems of a text, interdisciplinary systems of translology, or social systems at large. André Lefevere just took translation as a social system, describing it with such terms as poetics, patronage, ideology and so on. All of these systems should be ontologically connected together rather than too diverse to dissolve translology itself. In terms of Even-Zohar's theory, Theo Hermans remarked as follows:

The central idea of polysystem theory, as of all system theories, is relational. Not only are elements constantly viewed in relation to

other elements, but they derive their value from their position in a network. The relations which an element entertains with other elements are what constitutes its function or value. (Theo Hermans 2004: 106-107)

Therefore, we can safely say that any paradigm of translatology must be valuable in its systematic conduct of translation theories or practice. Without the systematic relations between theories, they are doomed to be weak in dealing with translation problems. In this respect, translatological dictionaries, one of the “Translation aids”, are conducive to dealing with translation studies in a systematic way, and the studies of translatological dictionaries (STD) itself can become a field of research under Translatology.

Property of openness

Translation theories are always open to be enriched, modified, abandoned or improved. Translatology is always ready to invite the useful perspectives from other disciplines. Lynne Bowker et al said:

Contributions to the discipline (translatology) come from the fields of machine translation, history, literature, philosophy, linguistics, terminology, interpreting, screen translation, translation pedagogy, software localization and lexicography. (Lynne Bowker et al 1998: Introduction)

That Bowker said here is not all. We can say that the perspectives can be borrowed from related disciplines, with the deepening of translation studies, will be endless. For instance, perspectives from gender studies, sociology, poststructuralism, postcolonial and cultural studies and so on can all be used in translatology.

In the introduction of the book of *Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett wrote as follows:

Most importantly, it is an attempt to demonstrate that Translation Studies is indeed a discipline in its own right: not merely a minor branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications. (Susan Bassnett 2004: 11)

Here I just want to point out that “complex field” should not be casual or random mixture of different academic fields. And all these “ramifications” should go around the ontology of translatology. Otherwise, translatology will turn to be groundless. In translatology, one approach or theory can not be universally effective, so in dealing with the translation problems we need resort to interdisciplinary perspectives. “Fortunately, more and more scholars are beginning to celebrate rather than resist the plurality of perspectives that characterizes the discipline (translatology).” (Mona Baker 2004: 280)

Translatology is in fact a growing discipline, so no theories or theorists can safely say that they have covered all the perspectives in this discipline. Lefevere stated:

The goal of the discipline was to ‘produce a comprehensive theory which can be used as a guideline for the production of translations’. The theory was to be neither neopositivistic, nor hermeneutic in inspiration and should be constantly tested against case-studies. Instead, it would be dynamic, not static because it would be in a state of continuous evolution. (Bassnett & Lefevere 2001: 124)

It is just being in a state of continuous evolution that makes translatology open in its nature, and increasingly endowed with new research perspectives. Likewise, Mona Baker remarked:

Translation studies can and will hopefully continue to draw on a variety of discourses and disciplines and to encourage pluralism and heterogeneity. (Mona Baker 2004: 280)

Here the “pluralism and heterogeneity” should be housed under Translatology and employed to serve the ontology of Translatology. STD is derived from the combination of translation studies with lexicography. It aims at studying translation by the form of dictionaries. Accordingly, STD can be regarded as one of the “pluralism and heterogeneity” under the discipline of Translatology.

The Nature of Translatological Dictionaries

Multidimensional in perspective and systematic in methodology, translatological dictionaries are very useful in translation studies, so many translation scholars have come to realize their importance. Edwin Gentzler said in his book as follows:

There are several encyclopedias now available or in press, including the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (1998), The Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English (2000), and Übersetzung, Translation, Traduction: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung (forthcoming), which provide a fine overview of the myriad of approaches now available. (Edwin Gentzler 2004: xii)

In his exposition, Gentzler pointed out the function of translatological dictionaries. They can generalize the situation of translation studies and systematically offer scholars rich materials.

Translatological dictionaries are so useful in translation studies that some scholars deliberately take them as a particular research field; as a consequence, STD comes into being. The basic thing for STD to do is to make clear the nature or identity of translatological dictionaries; otherwise, we will have no ontological ground, on which other theories are expected to set up.

The nature or identity of translatological dictionaries can be ontologically explained by the integration of translology and lexicography. From the translatological perspective, all the contents of translatological dictionaries have to do with translation studies. From lexicographical perspective, translatological dictionaries must be endowed with the characteristics of a dictionary. But what are the particular characteristics of a dictionary? There is no universal definition. "The best definition in metalexicography is actually a list of features draw up by Rey-Debove for her study of modern French dictionaries." (Béjoint 2002: 9) According to her, a dictionary can be defined by the following eight characteristics:

- a) A dictionary is a series of separate paragraphs;
- b) A dictionary is meant to be consulted, not read;
- c) Dictionaries have a double structure;
- d) A dictionary is an ordered set;
- e) A dictionary is a list of linguistic units;
- f) A dictionary is a didactic book;
- g) A dictionary gives information about linguistic signs;
- h) A dictionary is a structured representation of predetermined lexical set. (Béjoint 2002: 10-24)

Actually, apart from these eight characteristics, the compilation of a dictionary must involve many disciplines, such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, science of recognition, translology, computer science and so on. But these eight factors are vital in determining the being of a dictionary.

ZHANG Bo-ran insisted that a dictionary is characterized by two componential elements, one formal and the other functional, stating:

A dictionary must contain lemmas and their explanations, the former lexicographically called “left item” and the latter “right item”, which constitute the formal element of a dictionary. Meanwhile, the main task of a dictionary is to offer readers information and solve their problems, which is called the consultant function of a dictionary, the functional element. The formal element and the functional element should be unified organically. (SUN Ying-chun 2005: 4)

Given the formal and functional characteristics of general dictionaries and the characteristics of translation studies, ZHANG Bo-ran and HAN Jiang-hong defined the translatological dictionary as:

Specialized dictionaries collecting the translatological concepts, terms and proper names at various levels, outlining systematically the translatological knowledge. (ZHANG Bo-ran et al 2005: 42)

It is ontologically the content that determines the translatological dictionaries are specialized dictionaries, dictionaries for translation studies. The nature of translatological dictionaries thus lies in their presenting the translatological knowledge by means of the various entries to the readers for their research and practice. Considering this nature of translatological dictionaries, SUN Ying-chun gave a definition as follows:

Translatological dictionaries (TD) are reference books for translation studies. Knowledge-type TD gather together various translation theories and things, arranged in a certain order, describing the various aspects, history or current situation of translation studies, to supply information to the readers for knowing about or studying translatology. Practice-type TD offer varied equivalents of a linguistic item in different contexts, or different translations of a paragraph by different translators to

translators for their reference, or to scholars for their research.
(SUN Ying-chun 2005: 24)

Studies of Translatological Dictionaries

Lexicography usually deals with the dictionaries in terms of their nature, structure, typology, principle of compilation, function, history, criticism and so forth. As specialized dictionaries, TD must be characterized by the incorporation of translatology and lexicography. Generally speaking, STD mainly covers the following research areas:

- i) the nature of TD;
- ii) the typology of TD;
- iii) the compilation principle of TD;
- iv) the structure of TD;
- v) the criticism of TD;
- vi) the function of TD;
- vii) the history of TD;

Here STD especially means the theoretical research of TD, so the practical making of TD will be out of discussion. Of these areas, we will, in what follows, focus on the structure, typology, compilation principle, function and criticism of TD, as we have already talked about the nature above, and the STD has just begun, so it is not old enough to review its history, which can be left for future talk.

Typology of TD

To classify TD is conducive to systematizing the TD and covering every dimension of translation studies. As a matter of fact, different scholars may adhere to different standards of classification. In terms of the classification of dictionaries, Landau (1989), Hartmann & James (2000), Henri Béjoint (2002) and etc. have made their great contributions. Their

statements about the standards of classification are very beneficial to the typology of TD.

Sidney I. Landau elucidated the type of dictionaries in terms of eleven features: languages, manner of financing, age of users, size, scope of subject coverage, scope of lexical coverage, complexity of the lemma, primary language of the market, period of time covered, linguistic approach and means of access. Based on the consideration of many factors, Landau's classification is mainly to cope with the general dictionaries. But the classification of dictionaries according to these eleven features may be vague, for example, according to "manner of financing" and "age of users". Henri Béjoint suggested the following basic types of dictionaries:

- 1) General and specialized dictionaries;
- 2) Monolingual and bilingual dictionaries;
- 3) Encyclopedic and 'language' dictionaries;
- 4) Foreign learners' and native speakers' dictionaries;
- 5) Dictionaries for adults and dictionaries for children. (Henri Béjoint 2002: 37-40)

Béjoint's classification is more practical, but it is a little too rough or loose. Therefore, it can not go well with the classification of the special dictionaries. In classifying the dictionary, we should take into consideration many factors: the physical materials of a dictionary, the compiler's purpose, the users' perspective, the function of a dictionary and so on. In this regard, Hartmann & James's classification is more detailed and reasonable. It goes as follows:

A typology based on formal features is termed 'phenomenological'; one based on uses in context is termed 'functional'. More specifically, it is possible to distinguish dictionary types (sometimes called 'genres') by size (from 'unabridged' to 'gem'), by coverage ('general' versus 'specialized'), by format ('alphabetical' versus 'thematic'), by medium ('print' versus

‘electronic’), by functionality (‘active’ versus ‘passive’), by predominance of Information Categories provided (Dictionary, Thesaurus, Encyclopedia, Catalogue etc.), by languages (‘monolingual’, ‘bilingual’, ‘multilingual’, and by user type (‘scholarly’, ‘learner’s’, ‘translator’s’ etc.) (Hartmann & James 2000:147)

Hartmann & James’s classification is more complete in covering the types, and set a good foundation for the coming new types of dictionaries. As specialized dictionaries, TD must have their own characteristics. The classification of TD will be ontologically determined by what and on what extent they cover in terms of the translatological knowledge. Meanwhile, the classification must be clear, concise, practical and all-covering. In addition, users’ needs weigh a lot in the type of TD. An analysis of the users often goes before the actual compilation of a particular dictionary, as different user groups may have different needs. The differences between dictionaries are expressed by their “macrostructures” and “microstructures”.

Several translation theoreticians in China have tried to classify the TD. A famous scholar in China, ZHANG Jin put forward three categories of TD:

- 1) Dictionary of Translators This kind of dictionaries especially tend to introduce the lives and achievements of the famous translators and translation theoreticians;
- 2) Comprehensive Translatological Dictionaries This kind of dictionaries introduce, in an integrated way, the common knowledge about the history of translation, history of translation ideology, translation theories, translation skills, famous translators, monographs of translation theories, and appreciation of famous translations.
- 3) Specialized Translatological Dictionaries This kind of dictionaries can be used as reference books by the translators in special fields, such as science and technology, literature, social science, journalism and so on. (SUN Ying-chun 2003:

1-2)

This classification is more practical than systematic. A good typology of TD should systematically cover all types of TD, present or potential, and the different types should be categorized clearly, which will be conducive to getting a holistic knowledge of TD, studying TD in terms of the macrostructure and microstructure, and developing a relatively complete theory of STD (studies of translatological dictionaries) Taking these factors into consideration, SUN Ying-chun put forward his typology:

According to the content, TD can be divided into one-subject dictionaries and comprehensive dictionaries. Comprehensive dictionaries can be subdivided according to the countries involved (e.g. the international translatological dictionary or Chinese translatological dictionary); one-subject dictionaries can be subdivided into Theoretical Dictionaries, Practical Dictionaries, Language Dictionaries and Thematic Dictionaries, and these four types can further be subdivided respectively. (SUN Ying-chun 2003: 117)

Certainly we can say this typology is not set once for all. With the ontological evolution of translatology and lexicography, and the deepening of STD, this typology or any typology is doomed to be modified or improved.

Compilation principle of TD

As for the compilation principle, Henri Béjoint wrote something as follows:

In the 18th century lexicographers felt it was their duty to indicate—and in some cases decide—what was good and what was bad usage. They recommended some forms and banned others.

Such an attitude has been called *prescriptive*, the reverse being called *descriptive*. (Henri Béjoint 2002: 100)

For a long time in the lexicographical history, the principles of prescriptive method and descriptive method have always been in foreground. Due to different purposes, periods of time or cultural backgrounds, people do not always see eye to eye with each other in stressing one or the other element. According to Rey-Debove, prescriptiveness and descriptiveness are based respectively on a 'qualitative' norm and a 'quantitative' norm. What is the qualitative norm? Henri Béjoint's explanation goes like this:

The qualitative norm is based on the usage and on the opinion of the 'best' language users, as determined by a more or less clear consensus—often, in fact, only educators and well-known writers. (Henri Béjoint 2002: 100)

What is the quantitative norm? Henri Béjoint's explanation goes like this:

The quantitative norm is based on the observation of the linguistic usage of all the reasonably fluent users of the community. Any form is good as long as it is used by a certain number of speakers. (ibid)

Actually, total descriptiveness or total prescriptiveness is impossible, as no one can resort to one principle only during the whole process of compilation. Samuel Johnson intended to carry out his prescriptive ideas in his dictionary, but when his dictionary was published, the linguistic reality was actually out of his prescription. The same happened to Noah Webster, as he turned himself from a prescriptivist to a descriptivist during his compilation of the dictionary.

In terms of TD, compilers should strike a reasonable balance between prescriptiveness and descriptiveness. Prescriptiveness outweighing descriptiveness or descriptiveness outweighing prescriptiveness depends to a great extent on what and whom the dictionary will serve. Scholars may favor descriptive dictionaries; students, freelance translators or interpreters may favor prescriptive ones. In addition to these two principles, there also exist other basic principles, such as theoretical principle, scientific principle, practical principle, etc, which have been dealt with by many lexicographers. The characteristics of translatology should be paid enough attention to in formulating the compilation principles of TD. Without good understanding of the nature, characteristics and laws of translatology, one can not get principles suitable to TD. In this light, we put forward such a *general* principle as follows:

A translatological dictionary should collect the concepts and other related knowledge about translation studies, systematically describes the various aspects, history or current situation of translation studies, and elucidates the various translatological concepts and themes to assist and regulate the readers with their study or practice.

This general principle is expected to spark off different concrete principles according to different types of TD. One-subject TD, such as *Terms of Translatology*, *Dictionary of Translation Methods and Skills*, *Dictionary of Translation History*, *Dictionary of Translators*, etc. demand their corresponding compilation principles; comprehensive TD or encyclopedic TD should also have their respective principles. Let's take Shuttleworth and Cowie's *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, a kind of one-subject TD, for example. The aims of the dictionary go as follows:

- a) One of its aims is to provide an overview of some of the issues, insights and debates in Translation Studies, inasmuch as these are reflected in the discipline's terminology;
- b) It seeks to document the accumulation of knowledge and insights which has occurred over the last few decades, rather than introducing large numbers of new terminological distinctions;
- c) It is a dictionary of terms, not topics. (Shuttleworth 2004: Introduction)

By collecting the terms, Shuttleworth and Cowie want to faithfully describe the situation of Translation Studies. But as a dictionary of terms, it should pay enough attention to the theory of terminology, while adhering to the descriptive method, a main method in translation studies. A term should be, according to terminology, concise, scientific, generative and monosemous. In this light, some terms, such as "Games, Translation and the Theory of " (65) in the *Dictionary of Translation Studies* are problematic. An *Encyclopedia of Translatology* should try to be comprehensive, describing all the topics relevant to translation studies. In this respect, Mona Baker said in the Introduction of her *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* as follows:

Throughout the editing of this *Encyclopedia*, I have tried to keep an open mind on what constitutes a viable perspective on the study of translation and what might legitimately be seen as a relevant area of concern or method of research in translation studies. An encyclopedia of a scholarly subject has a duty to open up rather than unduly restrict the scope of the discipline it sets out to describe. (Mona Baker 2004: Introduction)

Structure of TD

The structure of a dictionary, which can be compared to the muscular tissues or vessels of the body of a dictionary, is the carrier of any idea

about a particular dictionary. Traditionally, the structure of a dictionary is considered to consist of the macrostructure and microstructure, which in turn consist of other small substructures. Macrostructure usually refers to “The overall List structure which allows the compiler and the users to locate information in a Reference Work”. (Hartmann & James 2000:91) Microstructure usually refers to the detailed information about the lemmas. Macrostructures mainly deal with vertically the arrangement of entries; microstructures with horizontally the arrangement of the information about a lemma. The interweavement of the macrostructure and microstructure will make up a systematic textural structure of a dictionary.

Dictionaries vary according to the amount of information they provide, and how they present it in the text of the entry. Different types of dictionaries always require different arrangements of the macrostructures and microstructures. The contents of these two structures are determined ontologically by the translatological knowledge. The lemmas must be concise, typical and systematic in presenting the related materials. Instead of showing the spelling, pronunciation, grammar, usage, etymology and etc, the right core of a lemma should embody the information of concepts, terms, or topics about translation studies. In addition, the amount of lemmas is often subject to the scale, the function and the user perspective.

More than three decades ago, Dubois was the first to take the dictionary as a text. Then, more linguists and lexicographers followed suit. For instance, Hartmann wrote as follows:

Fenner (1998) claimed that dictionaries are independent texts since their entries meet all the normal criteria of referential cohesion. (Hartmann 2005: 63)

Specialized dictionaries, TD mainly tend to convey knowledge rather than usage, so the presentation of knowledge in a systematic way is very important. Accordingly, text consciousness plays an important role in arranging the macrostructures and microstructures of TD.

Besides, the textual structure of TD should be organized according to the characteristics of translatology. Therefore, the knowledge presented by the structures of TD should be: a) systematic; b) academic; c) accurate; d) stable.

Criticism of TD

Béjoint once quoted Samuel Johnson in terms of the evaluation of a dictionary as follows:

Dictionaries, as Samuel Johnson said, are ‘like watches, the worst is better than none’, even if ‘the best cannot be expected to go quite true. (Béjoint 2002: 113)

Actually, the dictionary was long seen as unscientific and was not worthy of academic studies. Some linguists even thought that dictionary was just a by-product of linguistics. Meanwhile, lexicographers paid no heed to the role of linguistics in the compilation of dictionaries. With the time passing, especially in the forties and fifties of the 20th century, the linguists began to show their interest in dictionary-making. At the same time, dictionary-makers began to ask for advice and information from linguists. The lexicographers came to realize that linguistic theories were important in the improvement of dictionaries. By then, lexicography and linguistics advanced hand in hand. This situation was well expressed in Béjoint’s description:

Lexicography and linguistics are now inextricably mixed. No modern lexicographer can afford to ignore what linguistics has to offer. Linguistic research can not be ignored ... (Béjoint 2002: 177)

The criticism or evaluation of a dictionary, however, has gone beyond the perspectives of lexicography or linguistics. Perspectives from aesthetics, history, culture, sociology, computer engineering, etc. in fact, can be very beneficial.

As for TD, the criticism should be systematic, all-around, and profound in theories. Integrating the theories of translation studies and those of lexicography, and other relevant theories, the criticism of TD should not only reasonably point out the merits and demerits of a dictionary, but also point out its value or function. To criticize TD should aim at bettering TD.

Faced with a particular translatological dictionary, we can examine it at least from three aspects: its form, its content and its value. In terms of form, do the macrostructure and microstructure meet the requirements of lexicography? In terms of content, do the lemmas and their information reflect the characteristics of translation studies? In terms of value, what contributions does the dictionary make?

Function of TD

Though the function is involved in the criticism of TD, it is worthy of more words, as function determines the ontological value of TD. The being of any thing must have its existential values. We argue that the translatological dictionaries are a best, most compact and most economical compendium of translation studies. It is just the value or function that determines the STD is meaningful. In terms of the functions of TD, SUN Ying-chun pointed out as follows:

- a) to exhibit systematically the grand lineup and achievements of translation studies;
- b) to record the deeds of translators, history of translation studies and all relevant things;

- c) to generalize theories from the translation experience and to guide practice with them;
- d) to tidy up the concepts, terms and theories, which can be defined precisely or prescribed to avoid confusion, or described objectively in terms of different academic schools to promote the contention between schools of thought;
- e) to reflect the achievements and characteristics of translation studies;
- f) to serve as knowledge banks. (SUN Ying-chun 2005: Preface)

SUN Ying-chun's theory sets a good foundation for further study of the functions of TD. The analysis of these six functions tells us that TD have two main functions, one meta-theoretical and the other practice-guiding.

As for the meta-theoretical function, we argue that TD can make contributions to the theories of translology, lexicography and STD.

First, the contributions made by TD to Translatology mainly lie in systematizing the translation theories and offering reference for scholars. Then, TD, a kind of specialized dictionaries, can enrich the lexicographical theories, as they are ontologically different from other specialized dictionaries. TD must represent the characteristics of translation studies. Thirdly, the theories about TD can directly beget studies of translatological dictionaries (STD) as a relatively independent research area under the discipline of Translatology. Both Holmes and Toury pointed out that Translation Aids is an indispensable area to translation studies. TD, belonging to Translation Aids, have their own characteristics, and should deserve special studies. Meanwhile, translology is open in nature, so any perspective related to translation studies should be welcomed.

As for practice-guiding, TD can be expected to influence or regulate the behavior of translation scholars and beginners in their study. In addition,

professional TD can help the practitioners with the problems they meet during their translation practice. Nowadays, TD are not enough in quantity, and their quality needs improving, so the influence of TD is below our expectation. We are now trying to make the functions or values of TD well known, getting more scholars to show their interest in the STD.

Conclusion

This article illustrates that the being of translatological dictionaries is ontologically determined by the integration of translology and lexicography. Systematic and multidimensional in dealing with the knowledge of translation studies, translatological dictionaries can embody their value or function in helping building the discipline of translology. Translology is open in nature, so it should be acceptable to study translation by means of TD dictionaries. As specialized dictionaries, translatological dictionaries have their own properties which are obviously different from other specialized dictionaries, as they aim to serve translation studies. Accordingly, the studies of translatological dictionaries can become an relatively independent research field under the discipline of translology, as it has its own research object, research method and theoretical system.

Note

“Translation studies” in this article is used to mean the activities of translation research and practice; while “Translatology” means the discipline about translation theory and practice.

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