

acotara hasta dónde llega este primer volumen y qué cabe esperar de otros volúmenes ulteriores.

En cualquier caso, el esfuerzo realizado es loable, y el resultado es muy valioso, y, tal y como pretenden los editores, muy diferente al que se propone en otras obras de naturaleza similar.

Sólo nos resta, a este respecto, felicitar a los editores y a los autores de esta monografía colectiva e invitar al lector interesado a una lectura provechosa. El hilo conductor es la siempre inconclusa tarea de dar cuenta de la comunicación interlingüística e intercultural entendida desde un punto de vista general, holístico pero no excluyente. Y ahí reside la mayor virtud, a mi modo de ver, de esta obra. Con ella podemos adentrarnos en la clarificación de conceptos, términos, enfoques y/o estrategias traductológicas de la mano de expertos de reconocido prestigio en cada uno de los ámbitos y/o subámbitos objeto de consideración y conocer de primera mano, cuáles son las fuentes que estos expertos consideran más fiables y/o relevantes dentro del tema objeto de estudio en cada caso.

**Gile, Daniel; Hansen, Gyde and Pokorn, Nike (eds.) (2010). *Why Translation Studies Matters*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 269 pp.**

Reseña de Lothar Černý  
Cologne University of Applied Sciences  
[lothar.cerny@fh-koeln.de](mailto:lothar.cerny@fh-koeln.de)

*Why Translation Studies Matters* is a collection of papers presented at the 2007 EST congress in Ljubljana. It could be regarded as a collective answer of TS researchers to the question “Does translation studies matter?” In other words, the collection documents the self-doubt of an academic discipline in view of a practice that frequently questions the function and value of the theoretical concerns and aspects of TS. This kind of self-doubt is neither untypical nor uncommon in academic reflection, especially of the humanities and social sciences, but even pure sciences face the question of relevance for society, mostly when it comes to the question of financing projects whose immediate impact and use are not easily grasped. In the case of TS the problem is not so much the justification for vast expenses as required in particle physics or space exploration. TS, like many new disciplines developing out of established ones, has been under pressure to justify its nature from two sides: from the academic side, it had to prove its independent status (e.g. from linguistics, cf. Albrecht); from the side of practitioners, its usefulness. Pöchhacker points to the function of TS within the “ivory tower” and discusses the problematic of attributing a positive role of TS to the “world outside”. The present volume takes up this challenge from the practitioners’ vantage. It focuses on the question of whether research has or should have an impact on translation practice.

If one looks at the papers in terms of what they contribute to answering the question implied in the title or in what way they are able to affirm that TS matters, the picture appears rather uneven. The editors themselves seem to have been conscious of this because in the very first paragraph they shoulder the reader with the task of finding out in what way some papers contribute to the critical topic: “leaving it to the readers to identify the contribution of TS on the basis of the studies presented.” (p.vii) This is a bit too easy an excuse in the face of the well-known editorial dilemma of publishing papers of a conference. Editors should justify the functionality of the articles for the topic a bit more narrowly and in cases where this is not possible it would have been more appropriate to recommend publication of otherwise excellent articles elsewhere. Rather than offering a collection of papers with a clearly defined topic, the volume provides a survey of research in TS from theory to interdisciplinary projects. This constitutes its weakness and strength.

The positive aspect of providing a research survey should be stressed, however. Pöchhacker (p.10) in the beginning of the volume and Gile (p.257) at its end point to the hermeneutical issue involved in this discussion, that “self-reflection” is perhaps the most significant function for translation practice that TS initiates in the course of training at university level. This reference forms a kind of bracket for all the papers presented in this volume. They are part of the process in which TS as a whole reflects the nature, place and function of translation in academia and society. Altogether they prove that the question of relevance cannot be answered in a quick and easy, causal way. Short-cut answers, often polemical, eliminate the complexity of both theoretical and systematic considerations as well as the dynamic practice of professional translation. On the other hand, academic reflection as we see it in TS betrays something of an “inferiority complex” (cf. the paper by Koskinen, p.19). In the traditional academic setup “applied subjects” like T&I are not meant to reflect on fundamental issues that appear to be reserved for the pure sciences or branches devoted to critical reflection (Koskinen refers to “critical sociology” as such a branch), a difference that is reflected in the organisation of higher education in most European countries. The reproach that the theoretical discussion of translation is irrelevant to the “real world” suffers from historical short-sightedness. The history of religions, particularly of Christianity, shows that the discussion of translations led to significant transformations in the political and social setup of societies. Koskinen says quite rightly “TS has never really been in an ivory tower. But public TS remains largely invisible.” (p.24) Perhaps this is the reason why the present volume tries to answer the implied question in so many ways – I would say in too many ways. The crux of the matter is that the title does not mention an object: TS “matters”, but to whom, in what regard? While the main focus seems to be on the relevance of TS for practical professional translation (Pöchhacker and Gile again form the bridgeheads), a great many papers deal with the relevance of TS

- to its own research agendas

- to society and the public in a very broad sense
- to business
- to other related disciplines and to science.

The volume thus provides an impressive series of papers that document the research activities of TS. On the other hand – without criticizing the papers as such – this reader wonders whether some of the papers in Part 3 dealing with “Language issues” should not have found other places of publication. Considering that the topic is language, it is very regrettable that the first three papers do not offer a convincing link to the topic of the volume (and of the conference). This applies, I am afraid, to the contribution of the Grande Dame of TS on the role of English as *lingua franca* in TS. The question of whether TS matters or not could have been but was not discussed from this angle. Rachel Weissbrod’s otherwise very illuminating article on the sociology of language use in Israel does not provide any argument either why TS matters. Its topic is media research. Equally interesting, but hardly relevant in this context, are the articles on bridge languages and on register shifts. Zlatnar Moe does not even mention TS. On the other hand, the two remaining papers in Part 3 are excellent examples of why TS is in a position to matter for the practising translators, especially by means of its research tools and methodology. Williams provides an excellent description of corpus-based research on first-person verb use in English and Spanish bio-medical texts, pointing out that one function of such research is to prevent “repetition or perpetuation of translation behaviour” (p.138). This critical stance develops, according to Williams and the ACCENT project, by working with parallel as well as comparable components. Schmitz also provides valuable practical advice when it comes to translating less common institutional names in the media.

Part 4 on assessment and training provides further evidence that in academic teaching, translation theory contributes to translation practice in ways which are difficult to trace precisely. In her empirical study, Cintrão evaluates the functions of declarative and procedural knowledge. Whether one or the other is given priority in education remains a matter of dispute. In either case, the ability to detect and solve problems is conveyed to future translators. Both papers provide good arguments for the claim that TS matters in the sense that it’s not just learning by doing. Indeed, systematic teaching is effective especially in terms of procedural knowledge, something that practitioners tend to forget about because they have internalized such knowledge. In view of the relationship of TS to the world of translation practice, Kunz et al. write about the necessity for research — in this case “Corpora for Translation” (p.198) — to be pro-active, to show translators what “role corpora can play in the translation workflow” (p. 198).

To claim that TS matters for society is undoubtedly true in a non-utilitarian sense; the question is, however, whether society looks upon these contributions in such a way (cf. Camus’ paper on the constraints and censorship in the Franco era). Limon e.g. raises the important issue of intercultural communication in TS; certainly

this is the case, but again, does this mean that TS matters? And the question may be asked whether intercultural communication has really found a central place in TS. Even in today's curricula of T&I programmes intercultural communication appears as an "add-on" rather than an essential aspect of translation practice, an astonishing fact considering the impact caused by EST Prague 1995. TS has not really tackled the relationship between its linguistic and its (intercultural) communicative orientation. Thanks to functionalism (cf. the genealogy from Nida to Vermeer, to Nord), a perspective has certainly been established, but one should not exaggerate the ability of translators today to be "intercultural communication experts" (Risku et al. p. 93). Certainly, on the basis of functional translation studies (not to forget the development of community interpreting), today's translators and interpreters are much more aware of the intercultural problems than previous generations, but TS cannot afford too much patting of its own back.

There certainly is a social and political aspect of much TS research and rightly so, but to ask whether TS matters implies the efficacy of this research for the world outside academia. The effects are probably there, but certainly not easy to substantiate. Maybe TS has a marketing problem. In some instances, this means not only involving translators but also the managers of companies. When Risku et al. in their highly pertinent paper on the intellectual capital involved in translation point out that the "knowledge involved and embedded in professional translation forms a key factor in value creation in organisations" (p.84), they hardly need to convince translators (nor TS) of this but rather industry management and all those who make use of T&I services.

While the idea that inspired the title mainly suggests that TS has a function in relation to the world outside academia, there is – fortunately – "Part 5 Psychology". This section actually deals with research activities, which should be called scientific in the traditional sense of being experimental and empirical. Three papers report on the interdisciplinary research carried out in TS. And while the crossing of the borders of TS in direction of brain research cannot yet claim to show the usefulness of this interdisciplinary research, it is precisely in such areas that research has to be conducted. The first indications of relevance in terms of knowledge about the much-quoted "black box" of the mind again show that "what matters" should not be defined in too narrow and utilitarian way. Even if the practical application cannot be predicted yet, any discipline that aims at application needs research of such scientific rigour to prevent that its perspectives are defined only by the protean requirements of professional practice.