

Translation Studies

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Abstract

New discipline, as Mona Baker points out, has ‘grown at a phenomenal speed’ since the 1970s and 1980s. Introductions to translation studies point to a number of signs of its vitality, including the growing quantity of specialist journals, the establishment of centres for translation studies, and the founding of new series devoted to translation.

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Introduction:

Also apparent are the first stirrings of popular interest in translation studies, as reflected by the reception of a recent book by David Bellos.¹ There have been similar developments in the French context, although the discipline has grown at a much slower pace in France than in other francophone countries. Two of the most important journals, *Meta: journal des traducteurs* (1955–) and *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction* (1987–), were founded in Canada, where progress in the field has been significant from the outset. Other journals promoting scholarship on translation and French include *Babel: revue internationale de la traduction* (1955–) and *Palimpsestes* (1987–), both founded in France. The number of research centres for translation studies in French and francophone countries is still growing; the Centre d'études sur la traduction at the Université Paris Diderot-Paris 7, created in 2011, is one of the newest. Not surprisingly, some of the main centres for translation research are in Canada, for example at Concordia University in Montreal, the University of Montreal, and the University of Ottawa. One of the most important centres in France is the Centre d'études et de recherche en traductologie de l'Artois (CERTA), which publishes the series 'Traductologie'. Professional schools, such as the École supérieure d'interprètes et de traducteurs (ESIT), have also contributed to the development of the discipline. Centres in other countries that have fostered interest in French translation include the Centre for Translation Studies (CETRA) at KU Leuven in Belgium, and the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Today, translation studies are a vast interdiscipline extending from the arts and humanities through the social sciences to computer science. This *état présent*, therefore, is necessarily and extremely selective, considering only those subfields that are likely to be of great interest to *French Studies* readers. It focuses, in particular, on translation theory and literary translation, the history of translation, and linguistic approaches to translation studies. Notable subfields, excluded from the survey, are the more applied areas of machine translation, translation in specialist fields, localization, and interpreting studies. Other regrettable omissions include recent research in the emerging field of cognitive translation studies, as well a work on the place of translation in education, a topic that deserves more attention.²

Translation Theory and Literary Translation

This section discusses current scholarship on literary translation alongside the most relevant theoretical developments, all the while maintaining emphasis on French. There is no space here to provide a comprehensive overview of developments in the general field of translation theory. Instead, readers are referred to Anthony Pym's excellent *Exploring Translation Theories*, which examines seven different theoretical paradigms: 'natural equivalence', 'directional equivalence', 'purposes', 'descriptions', 'uncertainty', 'localization', and 'cultural translation'.³ Although early francophone translation theorists, such as Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, are relatively well known across the discipline,⁴ the general and the French-specific fields remain quite separate today. There are numerous explanations for this, including, ironically, a linguistic barrier: the fact that for a long time the work of some of the most influential theorists remained untranslated cannot be underestimated. Michael Schreiber,

in an insightful article on the reception of French translation theory, suggests another reason, namely that there has not yet been any real canonization of theoretical work within the French tradition.⁵

The relative separation of the general and the French fields means that there is considerable variation in the way that translation theory is conceptualized. Where Pym uses a series of paradigmatic shifts to explore the various theories, French scholars often employ a tripartite division between theories that are prescriptive, descriptive, and prospective.⁶ Inês Oseki-Dépré's book illustrates the value that tends to be accorded to prospective theories in the French context; these theories all stem from the experience of translating itself and, in the author's words, can be considered programmatic 'au sens où la traduction constitue une activité ouverte et, pourquoi pas, artistique'.⁷ This book also shows how influential the works of Henri Meschonnic, Jean-René Ladmiral, and Antoine Berman have been in the French tradition. Although Ladmiral has not produced a fully elaborated theory of translation, he covered a lot of ground in *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*.⁸ Meschonnic developed a poetics of translation where translation no longer involves transfer of meaning but is seen 'comme travail/dans la langue, *décentrement*, rapport interpoétique entre valeur et signification, structuration d'un sujet et histoire'.¹¹ Berman is slightly better known outside France, partly because of parallels between Lawrence Venuti's work and Berman's promotion of ethics in translation and a foreignizing translation practice.⁹

Although he did not treat translation per se directly, Pierre Bourdieu had an impact on the field of translation studies by inspiring the sociological approach that is very popular today.¹⁰ Similarly, Jacques Derrida's work has been applied to translation in the deconstructionist framework, but, as Schreiber pointed out, we are only just beginning to understand what the real applications of his theories will be for translation studies.¹¹ Venuti has drawn much attention to an essay on translation by Derrida, first by translating it and then by publishing an article on his own translation.¹² He explains the innovative strategy he used to produce a translation that resists expectations of fluency and transparency in order that the translation should '[highlight] its own discursive strategies and thereby [demand] to be read as a translation, as a text that is relatively autonomous from the text on which it depends'.¹³

Some of the new branches that bridge translation theory and literary translation include the study of what appear to be special kinds of translation, such as retranslation,¹⁴ self-translation,¹⁵ and translation at the margins, all of which contribute to undermining some common binary oppositions.¹⁶ Ladmiral and Yves Gambier have questioned certain assumptions often made about retranslation, for instance that it is motivated by a belief that some translations age or that 'great translations' do not, and the idea that retranslations are closer to the source text than are the first translations (Berman's 'retranslation hypothesis').¹⁷ Recent work on self-translation has also had a complicating effect. Michaël Oustinoff highlights its paradoxical nature: self-translation poses a typological problem that can only result in undermining the traditional distinction between translation and writing.¹⁸ The notions of source and target languages have also been destabilized by the general move from the centre to the periphery, which has forced scholars to confront new configurations of multilingualism and different forms of linguistic hybridity. This is

illustrated most obviously by research on translation in the postcolonial context; francophone Africa is one of the strongest centres of interest today.¹⁹

The expansion away from the traditional literary canon to include other genres can also be seen as part of the move from centre to periphery. Roger Baines has demonstrated the value of studying stage translation, with its two moments of transformation: textual translation, and adaptation for the stage.²⁰ There is also a rich field of research into audio-visual translation, now studied from a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives, including the literary-theoretical and sociocultural viewpoints. A recent issue of *Meta* highlights the ideological manipulation that takes place in this domain.²¹ Of particular interest for future research are the new kinds of translation that have come to exist alongside the traditional triad of subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over: this includes user-generated translation (fan subbing and fan dubbing) and translation for people with disabilities.²² There is clearly room for growth in scholarship on audio-visual translation and French, as there is in the general field. Aline Remael has suggested that the next turn in translation studies will be the ‘audiovisual turn’.²³

The application of sociocultural theory to the study of translation means that a whole host of individual themes has been explored in the context of translation. In the general field, for example, Judith Woodsworth cites important volumes on translation and power, translation and identity, and translation and postcolonialism.²⁴ Michel Ballard has edited a number of volumes in French that consider some of these themes.²⁵ Sherry Simon is known for her work on translation and the city.²⁶ Today, research on censorship, power, and ideology stands out as a particularly active field. Ballard's edited volume *Censure et traduction* draws attention to two kinds of censorship that sometimes go unrecognized: self-censorship imposed by the translator, and different kinds of invisible censorship present in the West today.²⁷ There is also likely to be further research on gender and translation in the coming years, particularly in the context of social-constructionist approaches, which undermine binary conceptions of gender.²⁸

Translation History

The expansion and diversification of the field of translation studies has led to a renewed interest in the historical dimension. Research on the history of French translation theory has played an important role in showcasing theoretical texts that predate the official origins of the academic discipline. In particular, publications by Lieven D'hulst and Ballard have contributed to our understanding of translation theory in the early modern period. Ballard has highlighted important seventeenth-century texts by Bachet de Méziriac and Gaspard de Tende,²⁹ while D'hulst has helped to paint a more nuanced picture of the eighteenth century by going beyond the simple assertion that fidelity was its central concern.³⁰ However, large gaps remain in our understanding of the evolution of French translation theory, whether explicitly formulated in theoretical texts or underpinning practice and attitudes more generally. In this regard, progress is expected with the forthcoming publication of the multivolume *Histoire des traductions en langue française*. Co-directors Yves Chevrel and Jean-Yves Masson anticipate that it will lead to a rethinking of the periodization of the history

of translation,³¹ and it is likely to complicate some of the generalizations that are used to link individual centuries to particular theoretical movements.

Since the 1990s greater interest has been shown in the history of French translation practice. The substantial quantity of material means that there have been few historical overviews, with scholars preferring to concentrate on particular periods, genres, and translators. The conference and Brepols book series 'The Medieval Translator' has focused attention on both theory and practice in the medieval period, and the relatively advanced state of the research on French is reflected in the same publisher's large-scale project *Translations médiévales*, covering five centuries.³² A recent collection of essays, edited by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills, suggests another direction for scholarship on medieval translation, one that involves greater interaction with theoretical developments in contemporary translation studies.³³ Among a good number of recent studies of translation in the Renaissance and early modern periods, several focus on the translation of English novels in the eighteenth century. Alongside her work on gender and translations of Ann Radcliffe, for example, Élisabeth Durot-Boucé has looked at (self-)censorship in translations of both Radcliffe and Jonathan Swift.³⁴ Annie Cointre and Annie Rivara have made important contributions with an anthology of prefaces to translations of English novels, and an edited volume on non-literary genres in the eighteenth century.³⁵ Giovanni Dotoli's work has helped to improve our understanding of all of these centuries by drawing attention to the continued importance of translation from Italian long after the Renaissance.³⁶

With the growth of the discipline, we are beginning to see histories that take a broader perspective. This includes Dotoli's overview of the theory and practice of translation from the Middle Ages to the present day.³⁷ Chevrel and Masson's history will be even broader in scope: as Yen-Mai Tran-Gervat explains, they conceive of translation as 'un phenomena complex et pluriel', so that contributors are asked to consider translation into French rather than translation in France and must take into account more marginal kinds of translation.³⁸ Jean Delisle has also contributed to this widening of perspective by focusing not on translations as texts, products, or processes but on translators themselves.³⁹ Viewing translation history from the perspective of the translating subject has the advantage of bringing together theory and practice. This field is likely to continue its expansion to account for trans- or supranational traditions and non-literary genres, and to explore new lines of inquiry such as the role of translation in general history.⁴⁰ It is hoped that this will be accompanied by increased reflection on the place and practice of translation history, as called for by Theo Hermans and by Woodsworth.⁴¹

Linguistic Approaches to Translation Studies

Linguistic approaches have been subject to serious criticism, particularly on the part of theorists, who advocate prescriptive or prospective approaches to translation and who are most concerned with literary, philosophical, and poetic translation.⁴² Detractors tend to focus on the limitations of a descriptive approach, and scholars have been charged with empiricism, echoing wider debates about the use of digital tools in the humanities. Today, this view has begun to look somewhat out of date. Andrew Chesterman has played an important role in challenging scholars using an empirical approach to ensure that their work really contributes

to advancing the field.⁴³ It is also no longer accurate to claim that linguistic approaches serve a purely descriptive function. Sara Laviosa has pointed to several recent lines of inquiry that are based on linguistic analysis but that go far beyond description, including a developing interest in ideology, and the new subfield of translation stylistics.⁴⁴ She has also called for more interdisciplinary work with scholars, who analyse translation from a literary, philosophical, or culture-theoretic perspective. A plethora of recent publications on translation studies and linguistics indicates that this is an area of central concern in the francophone sphere.⁴⁵

There are, of course, many different linguistic approaches to translation studies, but corpus-based translation studies (CTS) has emerged as the most fruitful. It developed out of a desire to apply the methods of corpus linguistics to descriptive translation studies.⁴⁶ In CTS, large electronic corpora are used to test hypotheses about features of translated language, in either an applied or a theoretical context. In the twenty years, since Mona Baker first proposed the approach,⁴⁷ much of the research in the descriptive-theoretic domain has been used to investigate so-called 'translation universals'. Although the term was originally inspired by linguistic universals, it is generally no longer understood in an absolute sense. Laviosa recognizes Chesterman's reframing of the concept, so that the translation universal is now often seen as 'a descriptive construct, an open-ended working hypothesis about "similarities, regularities, patterns that are shared between particular cases or groups of cases"'.⁴⁸ The value of translation universals is that they help to capture generalizations about translated language that reveal how it can differ from non-translated language. Common features of translated language include influence from the source language, the underrepresentation of features unique to the target language, explicitation, and a reduction of linguistic variation.⁴⁹

There has been a significant amount of research into French translation from a linguistic perspective, with many of the corpus-based studies originating in northern European or in multilingual francophone countries. Recent publications on translation and linguistics all address directly the question of the articulation of the relationship between these two disciplines. Tatiana Milliaressi's edited volume is an excellent introduction to this debate, since the first section, on metatheoretical approaches, contains papers by theorists with very different perspectives: François Rastier, Ladmiral, and Pym.⁵⁰ Such volumes also present research that demonstrates the value of linguistic approaches. In Ballard and Al Kaladi's edited volume, for example, a group of papers uses linguistics to rethink classic translation problems, including metaphor, empathy markers, and tense and aspect.⁵¹ The advantages of bridging the gap between literary-theoretic and linguistic-descriptive approaches have also been illustrated by recent studies of translations into French. This includes work by Charlotte Bosseaux on point of view,⁵² by Mairi McLaughlin on dislocated constructions, and by Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov on reported speech.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that translation studies will continue its expansion along similar lines, with increasing interdisciplinarity accompanied by a shift of balance from the centre to the periphery and from the canon to the non-canonical. As progress is made in each subfield, we shall begin to see moments of reflection, and taking stock has already begun for translation in

the medieval period. A crucial moment in the discipline will come when this stage has been reached in a number of different areas, because it will allow higher-level generalizations to be captured. Although the long process of institutionalization has begun for translation studies as an academic discipline, there is still uncertainty about its position. This is felt most keenly in officially monolingual countries, such as France, which have traditionally been less receptive to the study of translation. We might hope that, for the future of translation studies and French, this bias will be mitigated by the recognition today that it is monolingualism that is the exception.

References

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- 4) J.-P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: méthode de traduction* (Paris: Didier, 1958).
- 5) Michael Schreiber, 'Zu Entwicklung und Rezeption der französischsprachigen Übersetzungswissenschaft', in *Geschichte und Gegenwart der Übersetzung im französischen Sprachraum*, ed. by Wolfgang Pöckl and M. Schreiber (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 47–59 (p. 56).
- 6) For instance, see Inês Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques de la traduction littéraire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999); Jacqueline Guillemin-Flescher, 'Théoriser la traduction', *Revue française de linguistique appliquée*, 8.2 (2003), 7–18; and Jean-René Ladmiral, 'Sur le discours méta-transductif de la traductologie', in *Le Parcours du sens: d'une langue à l'autre. Mélanges offerts à André Clas/The Way of Meaning: From a Language to Another. Collection of Articles Offered to André Clas*, ed. by Salah Mejri and Gaston Gross (= *Meta*, 55.1 (2010)), pp. 4–14. An obvious exception is Mathieu Guidère's *Introduction à la traductologie: penser la traduction, hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, 2nd edn (Brussels: De Boeck, 2010).
- 7) Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, p. 97.
- 8) Jean-René Ladmiral, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction* (Paris: Payot, 1979).
- 9) Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique II: épistémologie de l'écriture. Poétique de la traduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 313–14 (emphasis original); see also his *Poétique du traduire* (Paris: Verdier, 1999).
- 10) Antoine Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre, ou, L'auberge du lointain* (Paris: Seuil, 1999). Lawrence Venuti, in *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), explains that his own thinking has evolved since the 1990s and that he now rejects the instrumentalism in Berman's approach (p. 4).
- 11) Jean-Marc Gouanvic and Gisèle Sapiro in particular contributed to the development of these ideas: see J.-M. Gouanvic, *Sociologie de la traduction: la science-fiction américaine dans l'espace culturel français des années 1950* (Arras: Artois presses université, 1999), and G. Sapiro, 'French Literature in the World System of Translation', in *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History*, ed. by Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 298–319.
- 12) Schreiber, 'Zu Entwicklung und Rezeption', p. 54.

- 13) Jacques Derrida, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction "relevante"?' in *Quinzièmes assises de la traduction littéraire* (Arles 1998) (Arles: Actes Sud, 1999), pp. 21–48; Lawrence Venuti, 'Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 16.2 (2003), 237–62.
- 14) Ibid., p. 258.
- 15) *La Retraduction*, ed. by Robert Kahn and Catriona Seth (Rouen: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2010); *Autour de la retraduction: perspectives littéraires européennes*, ed. by Enrico Monti and Peter Schnyder (Paris: Orizons, 2011).
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- 17) Some of these oppositions have also been called into question in Clive Scott, *Translating the Perception of Text: Literary Translation and Phenomenology* (Oxford: Legenda, 2012).
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- 19) Michaël Oustinoff, *Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-traduction: Julien Green, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001). See also Nicola Danby, 'The Space Between: Self-Translator Nancy Huston's *Limbes/Limbo*', *La Linguistique*, 40.1 (2004), 83–96.
- 20) See, for instance, Paul F. Bandia, *Translation as Reparation: Writing and Translation in Postcolonial Africa* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2008); and Kathryn Batchelor, *Intimate Enemies: Translation in Francophone Contexts* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
- 21) Examples include Roger Baines and Fred Dalmaso, 'A Text on Trial: The Translation and Adaptation of Adel Hakim's *Exécuteur 14*', *Social Semiotics*, 17.2 (2007), 229–57; and *Staging and Performing Translation: Text and Theatre Practice*, ed. by Roger Baines, Cristina Marinetti, and Manuela Perteghella (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2011).
- 22) See Jorge Díaz-Cintas, 'Présentation', in *La Manipulation de la traduction audiovisuelle/The Manipulation of Audiovisual Translation*, ed. by J. Díaz-Cintas (= *Meta*, 57.2 (2012)), pp. 275–78. On the role of the visual in translation more generally see *Le Verbal, le visuel, le traducteur/The Verbal, the Visual, the Translator*, ed. by Riitta Oittinen and Klaus Kaendl (= *Meta*, 53.1 (2008)).
- 23) Lucile Desblache's AHRC-funded project 'Translating Music' is likely to be very interesting in this perspective: <<http://www.translatingmusic.com/index.html>> [accessed 8 March 2014].

- 24) Aline Remael, 'Audiovisual Translation', in *Handbook of Translation Studies* [see n. 2 above], I, 12–17 (p. 15).
- 25) Judith Woodsworth, 'Foreword to the Second Edition', in *Translators through History/Les Traducteurs dans l'histoire*, ed. by Jean Delise and J. Woodsworth, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), pp. xiii–xviii (pp. xiv–xv).
- 26) These include *Europe et traduction*, ed. by Michel Ballard (Arras: Artois presses université, 1998); *Oralité et traduction*, ed. by M. Ballard (Arras: Artois presses université, 2001); *La Traduction, contact de langues et de cultures*, ed. by M. Ballard, 2 vols (Arras: Artois presses université, 2005–06); and *Censure et traduction*, ed. by M. Ballard (Arras: Artois presses université, 2011).
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- 28) See also *Censure et traduction en deçà et au-delà du monde occidental/Censorship and Translation within and beyond the Western World*, ed. by Denise Merkle (= *TTR*, 23.2 (2010)).
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- 33) *Translations médiévales: cinq siècles de traductions en français, XI^e–XV^e siècles. Étude et répertoire*, ed. by Claudio Galderisi, 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). An online database is due to be published in 2014.
- 34) *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory*, ed. by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012). Similarly, the second chapter of Simon Gaunt's *Marco Polo's 'Le Devisement du Monde': Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013) can be linked to a general move in translation studies away from the traditional model of translation in monolingual nation states.

- 35) Élisabeth Durot-Boucé, 'Traducteurs et traductrices d'Ann Radcliffe, ou la fidélité est-elle une question de sexe?', in *Traduire le genre* [see n. 31 above], pp. 101–28; and 'La Traduction des romans anglais au XVIII^e siècle: censure ou autocensure?', in *Censure et traduction* [see n. 28 above], pp. 115–29.
- 36) *Recueil de préfaces de traducteurs de romans anglais, 1721–1828*, ed. by Annie Cointre and Annie Rivara (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006); *La Traduction des genres non romanesques au XVIII^e siècle: actes du colloque international tenu à Metz les 14–15 mars 2003*, ed. by A. Cointre and A. Rivara (Metz: Centre d'études de la traduction, Université de Metz, 2003).
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- 40) *Portraits de traducteurs*, ed. by Jean Delisle (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa; Arras: Artois presses université, 1999); *Portraits de traductrices*, ed. by Delisle [see n. 31 above]; *Translators through History*, ed. by Delisle and Woodsworth [see n. 27 above].
- 41) There is already a growing body of work on scientific and medical translation; see, for example, *Traduire la science: hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. by Pascal Duris (Pessac: Publications de la Maison des sciences de l'homme d'Aquitaine, 2008). Mairi McLaughlin has also highlighted the value for translation studies of research on the history of news translation; see M. McLaughlin, 'La Traduction et l'innovation linguistique dans la presse d'information sous l'Ancien Régime' (forthcoming).
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- 43) Linguistic approaches were also criticized by adherents of the interpretative approach developed by Marianne Lederer and Danica Seleskovitch; see Guillemin-Flescher, 'Théoriser la traduction' [see n. 8 above], p. 14.

- 44) For example, see Andrew Chesterman, 'The Space between the Data and the Concepts', *MikaEL: Electronic Proceedings of the KäTu Symposium on Translation and Interpreting*, 4 (2010), <www.sktl.fi/~Bin/40686/Chesterman_MikaEL2010.pdf> [accessed 8 March 2014].
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- 46) See, for instance, *Traductologie, linguistique et traduction* [see n. 18 above]; and *De la linguistique à la traductologie: interpréter/traduire*, ed. by Tatiana Milliaressi (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2011).
- 47) For an up-to-date assessment of the state and future of the corpus-based approach see *Corpus-Based Translation Studies* [see n. 47 above].
- 48) Mona Baker, 'Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Applications', in *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair*, ed. by M. Baker, Gill Francis, and Elena Tognini-Bonelli (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993), pp. 233–50.
- 49) Andrew Chesterman, 'Beyond the Particular', in *Translation Universals: Do They Exist?*, ed. by Anna Mauranen and Pekka Kujamäki (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), pp. 33–49 (p. 33); cited in Laviosa, 'Corpus-Based Translation Studies' [see n. 47 above], p. 17.
- 50) See *Translation Universals* [see n. 51 above].
- 51) *De la linguistique à la traductologie* [see n. 48 above].
- 52) *Traductologie, linguistique et traduction* [see n. 18 above]; see also the second section of *De la linguistique à la traductologie* [see n. 48 above].