

**Zeitschrift:** Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée / VALS-ASLA  
**Herausgeber:** Vereinigung für Angewandte Linguistik in der Schweiz = Association suisse de linguistique appliquée  
**Band:** - (2005)  
**Heft:** 81: Empirical research into translation and interpreting : processes and products = Recherches empiriques sur la traduction et l'interprétation : processus et produits = Empirische Übersetzungs- und Dolmetscherforschung : Prozesse und Produkte  
**Vorwort:** Introduction  
**Autor:** Künzli, Alexander

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.02.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# Introduction

The present issue contains eight papers on translation and interpreting. *Translation* refers to the rendering of texts written in a source language into texts written in a target language. *Interpreting* is its oral counterpart: the rendering of speeches delivered in a source language into speeches delivered in a target language.

Translation and interpreting are complex activities that have been practised and reflected upon for thousands of years. The beginnings of translation date back to the invention of writing. Bilingual and trilingual lists of words were found on 4,500 year old clay tablets excavated in Mesopotamia. Interpreting is mentioned in the Old Testament and was used by the Romans and Greeks in their campaigns and in public administration (see Snell-Hornby, Hönl, Kussmaul & Schmitt, 1999, chaps. 10 and 11 for an account of the history of translation and interpreting).

Systematic research into translation and interpreting started in the mid-twentieth century. It was at that time that the first Departments of Translation and Interpreting were created in universities across Europe and North America. Besides increased scholarly investigation, this development also led to a growing professionalization of the translation and interpreting industry.

Conceived by Holmes (1988) as early as 1972, the term *translation studies* with its three branches of descriptive, theoretical and applied translation studies, has been accepted since the 1990s as the general heading of a multidisciplinary approach that integrates sub-disciplines dealing with different aspects of translating and translations. Many scholars have a unitary vision of translation and interpreting research. As a result, interpreting is often considered an integral part of translation studies. However, more recently, the designation *interpreting studies* has come to be used to refer to the (sub-) discipline involved with research into the oral mode of translation (Pöchhacker and Shlesinger, 2002).

Interpreting takes on various forms. A major distinction is made between conference interpreting, media interpreting, court interpreting and community interpreting, the latter being practised in health services or administration. A further distinction is made between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. In this issue, we are concerned with (the simulation of) simultaneous conference interpreting only.

Empirical research into interpreting started in the 1960s on the basis of models and methods developed in cognitive experimental psychology. The focus was on conference interpreting and in particular the simultaneity of the speaking and listening processes. However, product aspects, such as the

quality of the interpreter's performance, were sometimes also considered (for an overview, see Snell-Hornby et al., 1999, chap. 34). Translation research, on the other hand, has traditionally been product-oriented. It was not until the middle of the 1980s that the first major empirical research projects were carried out in order to explore what is actually going on in the translator's mind (Krings, 1986). This change of perspective – from the study of the product, i.e., the written text, towards that of the process – has led to the challenging of traditional views and the investigation of dimensions that had remained unexplored thus far.

During the first years of research into translation processes, the outcome of the processes was considered of secondary importance; probably as a reaction against the long-standing tradition of focusing on the product. In some cases, participants in process studies were even told that they need not bother about the quality of their output. As a result, the study of the linguistic aspect of translation was often relegated to the background by other perspectives: cognitive, socio-cultural, philosophical. A similar shift of interest could be observed at a more general level in translation studies. Only very recently has this development started to be questioned. Very convincingly so for instance in last year's 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies in Lisbon, by Brian Mossop in his panel entitled "Back to translation as language".

The papers in this issue have in common the adoption of a combined perspective. They are interested in describing some of the processes taking place in translation and interpreting, but at the same time also in taking a closer look at the linguistic outcome of these processes: the written translation or the (transcript of the) oral interpretation, respectively. Such a perspective in translation research has been successfully pursued at for instance the Copenhagen Business School (see Hansen, 1999, but also Alves, 2003) and is often referred to as *triangulation*, that is, the comparison of different views of the same thing – here, the investigation of one and the same phenomenon in translation by means of different data sources that complement each other. The papers on translation contained in the current issue make use of think-aloud protocols, keystroke logging of the writing process, interviews, questionnaires and quality assessment. Those dealing with interpreting investigate issues such as the effect of the speed of delivery of the original speech or the effect of a non-native accent on the interpreter's performance, as well as live interpreting vs. remote interpreting. They do so by means of both experimental and observational methods.

Process studies are particularly suitable for investigating problems raised by linguistic phenomena which may be difficult to identify or explain if we only look at the product of the translation or the interpreting process. Several contributions in this issue set out to study such phenomena (implicitness in the

source text, word formation, markers of literariness, or the rendering of German SOV structures into Romance languages). Most papers in this issue also deal with quality assessment. The incorporation of quality assessment into process studies is something practitioners and teachers of translation and interpreting have been asking for for a long time. Process studies are a very useful tool for making both trainee translators and interpreters on the one hand, and professional translators and interpreters on the other hand, realize what they do and maybe even why they do it. If researchers make an attempt to investigate the relationship between process and quality – however difficult it may be to agree on what constitutes a good translation or interpretation – trainees and professionals may get just the kind of knowledge they are looking for in order to develop even more efficient strategies – a wish expressed by many a professional translator and interpreter (Chesterman and Wagner, 2002).

The papers included in this special issue of the *Bulletin Suisse de Linguistique Appliquée* on translation and interpreting make a contribution to a better understanding of the relationship between processes and products. In doing so, they also demonstrate an interest in the real problems of professional translation and interpreting. I hope that they will stimulate further discussion and investigation.

Alexander KÜNZLI

Stockholm University

alexander.kunzli@fraitu.su.se

## REFERENCES

- Alves, F. (2003) (Ed.). *Triangulating translation: Perspectives in process oriented research*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Chesterman, A. and Wagner, E. (2002). *Can theory help translators? A dialogue between the Ivory Tower and the Wordface*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Hansen, G. (1999). *Probing the process in translation: Methods and results* (Copenhagen Studies in language 24). Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur.
- Holmes, J. S. (1988). *Translated! Papers on literary translation and translation studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Krings, H. P. (1986). *Was in den Köpfen von Übersetzern vorgeht. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Struktur des Übersetzungsprozesses an fortgeschrittenen Französischlernern*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Pöchhacker, F. & Shlesinger, M. (2002) (Eds.). *The interpreting studies reader*. London: Routledge.
- Snell-Hornby, M., Hönl, H. G., Kussmaul, P. & Schmitt, P. A. (Eds.) (1999). *Handbuch Translation*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

