

PowerPoint presentation:

**Research into interpreting (and translation):
terminological distinctions that matter**

Xi'an Jiaotong University presentation
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D. Gile
Université Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle
daniel.gile@yahoo.com
www.cirinandgile.com

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TIS terms discussed in this presentation

Cognitive Load/ Cognitive Effort *slides 20-22*
Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies (CTIS) *slide 14*
Conference interpreter *slides 11, 13*
Consecutive *slides 11, 13, 16, 20*
Deverbalization *slides 23-24*
Distal *slides 18-19*
Expert, expertise *slide 15*
Framing Information *slides 5-6*
Interpret/interpreter *slide 9*
Interpreting Studies (IS) *slide 14*
Linguistically and Culturally Induced Information *slides 5-6*
Message *slides 5-6*
Proximal *slides 18-19*
Quasi-experiment *slide 10*
Secondary Information *slides 5-6*
Sight translation *slide 12*
Strategies *slides 16-19*
Tactics *slides 16-19*
Translate/Translator *slide 9*
Translation Studies (TS) *slides 14, 25*
Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS) *slides 3, 14*

Introduction

Terminology in research has always been challenging:

Lack of consensus in research communities,

Lack of clarity

Polysemy, individual variations in use

Personal preferences

With respect to metaphors, sound, transparency of the term

Ideology

Linguistic 'nationalism' and rejection of foreign terms

Disciplinary rivalry and power games

Will not discuss all of these in depth

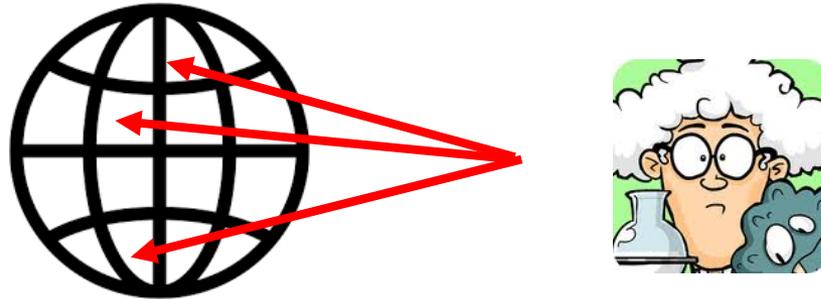
A few ideas,

then focus on a few TIS*-relevant terminological contrasts

* *TIS: Translation and Interpreting Studies*

Terms in science (1)

Science looks at reality ‘piece by piece’



When it identifies an object/idea/phenomenon (‘entity’)
and addresses it research-wise,
if this entity does not have a name in everyday language,
a name is often created – for the sake of convenience,
to avoid long descriptions/definitions when discussing it

Sometimes *existing names* take on a *specific meaning* in the relevant field
for the purpose of research

Example: ‘Message’, ‘Secondary Information’ (1)

Starting question: **Is it OK in translation to deviate from author’s wording?**

An experiment:

Clinton → Obama → Trump → ?

(*Message expressed visually by “ → ?”*)

Example of verbalized production : “Who will be the next U.S. President?”

‘**Message**’ (Who question) +

‘**Framing information**’ (former US Presidents in chronological order) +

‘**Linguistically and Culturally Induced Information**’ (*singular of “President”*)

In the more than 100 replications, verbalizations generally included:
Message + ‘Secondary Information’ (FIU, LCII, PI – *Personal Information*)

Gile, D. *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*,
John Benjamins, 2009

Example: ‘Message’, ‘Secondary Information’ (2)

These ‘information entities’ proved instrumental in convincing students that it was legitimate to deviate somewhat in one’s linguistic choices from the author of the original wording, and **held potential for further research,**

They accounted for variation in the form of utterances, depending on

- Environment and context (*Framing Information*)
- Language and culture (*Linguistically and Culturally Induced Information*)

Both FI & LCII helped explain and justify shifts in the interest of communication

LCII particularly interesting for further investigation

FI could be explained and explored in terms of Relevance Theory

so I felt it would be convenient to give them names

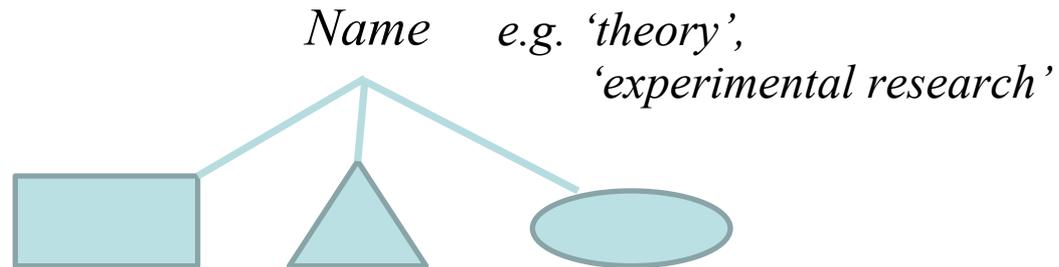
P.S. Still have doubts about ‘Framing Information’. ‘Orientation Information’/’Guiding Information’ better?

Terms in science (2)

When do substantial problems arise around terms? Often when

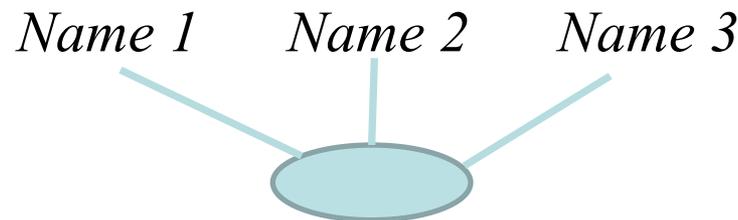
same name covers different entities

Leads to confusion when studying them



When different names for same entity,
not as problematic

Very frequent in physics, mathematics (theorems, physical laws)

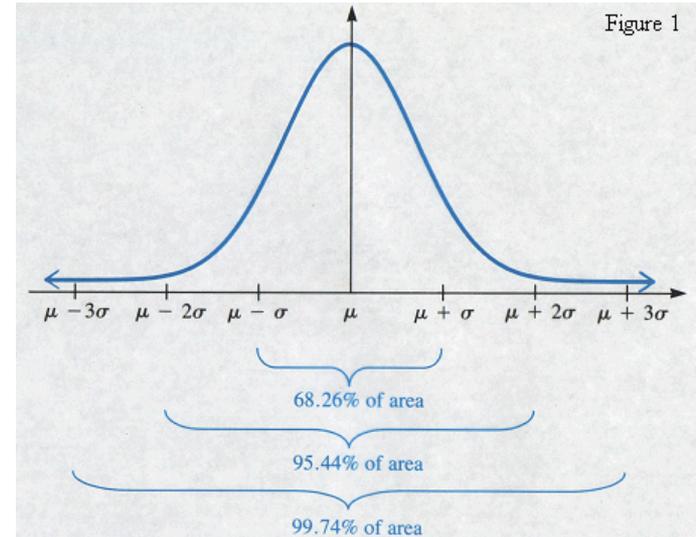


Terms in science (3)

‘Normal distribution’

‘Gauss/Gaussian distribution’

‘Laplace-Gauss distribution’



(Different names for the same entity)

‘Translator’ vs. ‘Interpreter’, ‘Translate’ vs. ‘Interpret’

Translator and interpreters have the same basic function

In daily life, a distinction is not necessarily useful

TV interpreting: « *les traducteurs* » (‘the translators’)

**In research, when *exploring* ‘Translation’ & ‘Interpreting’,
the distinction matters:**

- Modality (written vs. oral/signed)

- Quality criteria

(*Language, completeness and accuracy of information, voice and prosody*)

- Cognitive pressure

When going deeper and deeper into scientific exploration,
use of different names is convenient

**Generally in research, trend towards increasing terminological
subdivisions as exploration progresses**

Are terminological distinctions *always* useful in research?

Example of subdivisions that are not necessarily useful/productive in TIS:

‘Experimental’ vs. ‘Quasi-experimental’

In some behavioral sciences, e.g. *cognitive psychology*
‘true’ experimental research only if some conditions are met
(*In particular random assignment of subjects to groups*)

Otherwise, ‘*quasi-experimental*’

Not always relevant in other disciplines, e.g. physics,
and when the experiment involves no comparison between groups

In such cases, ‘experimental’ OK

‘Quasi’ suggests ‘not quite’ – inferior quality

In TIS, the distinction sometimes used to affirm one-upmanship?

Possibly counter-productive in terms of motivation?

‘Consecutive Interpreter’ vs. ‘Simultaneous interpreter’

Two types of consecutive:

- **Long segments, with note-taking:** done by conference interpreters
Attention-sharing, note-taking technique (“*true consecutive*”)
- **Sentence by sentence, no systematic note-taking:** done mostly by liaison/community interpreters in dialogue situations
No attention-sharing, but faster reactions required

**Saying ‘consecutive interpreters’ for ‘non-conference interpreters’
leads to confusion**

Especially when talking about *skills*, because skills
of conference interpreters working in consecutive
and non-conference interpreters
are not the same

'Sight Translation' vs. 'Simultaneous interpreting'

In some studies on sight translation – subjects were referred to as “interpreters”. Why?

Perhaps the answer lies in terminological ambiguity

One author wrote that ST is very frequent in conference interpreting

I do not remember many instances of ST during my career

Could it be that some authors consider ST as a form of interpreting?

In exchanges with a colleague, s/he explained to me that

X (a well-known author) wrote that ST is a form of simultaneous interpreting

Two objections:

1. No matter how well-known the authors, their words are not **The Truth**
In research, every published statement needs to be considered critically
2. ST is similar to SI in that the time shift between reading the ST and producing the TT is very short, *but*
 - SI is paced by the speaker, ST by the sight-translator
 - ST depends on visual processing, SI on auditory processing
(in SI with text, visual *and* auditory, but still paced by the speaker)

‘Conference Interpreter’ vs. other types of interpreters

‘Conference interpreter’

‘Media/Broadcast interpreter’

Media interpreters are generally specialized conference interpreters

vs

‘Community interpreter’

‘Court interpreter’

‘Liaison interpreter’

Differences not necessarily in mode (consecutive/simultaneous)
whispered simultaneous, simultaneous signed language interpreting

But in

- Linguistic and cognitive requirements and standards (AIIC)
- Generally, socio-economic status
- Generally, training

Note that this is changing

Is the distinction between those categories of interpreters ‘divisive’?

Not in terms of research, depending on the local environment, where they can be relevant – or not.

‘Translation Studies’, ‘Interpreting Studies, TIS, CTIS

‘Translation Studies’ (coined by *Holmes, in the 1970s*)

to name *research into translation,*

sometimes confused with ‘*learning translation*’

‘Translatology’ better?

‘Translation Studies’ is now well established, confusions are rare

In other languages, not necessarily problematic

翻譯論 通訳論

Is ‘IS’ (Interpreting Studies) – part of TS? Now ‘TIS’ proposed

For recognition of IS as having the same status as TS

But if ‘TIS’ adopted, ‘TS’ would refer specifically to written translation

Good? Bad?

New subfield which claims (sub-) disciplinary identity:

‘CTIS’ – ‘Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies’

‘Interpreter’ vs. ‘student’, ‘participant’, ‘subject’, ‘expert’

In some papers, studies are done with student participants only but in the discussion and conclusion, authors refer to “the interpreters”

This is misleading: **students are not ‘interpreters’**

Findings about students are *not* findings about interpreters

Cognitive skills are not the same

(Students are still learning them, and many students will never become interpreters because they do not manage to acquire the required skills)

Similar problems with experienced interpreters being referred to as ‘*experts*’

*(Specific meaning of ‘expertise’ in cognitive psychology
Some experienced interpreters will never become experts)*

Many younger colleagues align themselves with general terminological usage,
but

**should one use terms erroneously or ambiguously just because
“many/most authors use them”?**

‘Strategies’ vs. ‘tactics’ (1)

When facing problems *during* simultaneous interpreting (SI)
Comprehension, reformulation, loss of info in WM etc.

Interpreters have developed certain ‘re-actions’
Stalling, paraphrasing, replacing item with hypernym, etc.
(other ‘re-actions’ in consecutive, in translation)

These actions have been studied/are being studied by many authors
most of whom refer to them as ‘*strategies*’

But actually, besides the *immediate* reactions to problems as they arise,
planned problem prevention actions also exist as part of optimization

‘Strategies’ vs. ‘tactics’ (2)

When looking at problem prevention and mitigation of effects
(*comprehension, reformulation, loss of info in WM etc.*)

Interpreters have developed certain *preparatory actions*

- *Preparing glossaries*
- *Marking speeches to be read by the speaker if available*
(*underlining, highlighting, slashes, glosses, translation of passages...*)
- *Text management in the booth*
(*numbering, ordering...*)
- *Asking the client for documents*
- *Asking the client for a briefing*
- *Asking speakers/delegates for information/translation of terms*
- *Requesting standing/seating/lighting (in the case of Signed Language Interpreting) arrangements...*

‘Strategies’ vs. ‘tactics’ (3) – ‘Proximal’ vs ‘Distal’

In other words,

Some of the actions occur *during* the actual processing of the speech
‘proximal’ part of the work – metaphorically ‘close’ to its technical core
(term borrowed from medicine)

Some of them occur *before* the actual processing of the speech
‘distal’ part of the work – more ‘remote’ from the core part of
translation/interpreting

*And some interpreting-related actions to prevent problems also occur
after the actual processing of the speech (they are also ‘distal’)*

In written translation, distal actions are rather salient
(client management strategies, translation project strategies)

***Should these two categories of action have the same name
(‘strategies’?)***

‘Strategies’ vs. ‘tactics’ (4)

Proximal actions (immediate, during interpreting/translation)

rely largely on cognitive skills

(best decisions under the pressure of time and attention sharing)

Distal actions rely mostly on declarative knowledge

gained from experience or taught

In the context of research, distinguishing between them makes sense
especially in view of the focus on interpreting cognition in TIS

How to call them?

‘proximal strategies’ vs. ‘distal strategies’?

‘preparatory strategies’ vs. ‘coping strategies’?

In Japanese 近 vs 遠 近戦略 vs. 遠戦略 ?

My preference:

‘Tactics’ & ‘strategies’

(both are existing terms,

borrowed from the military – as is the case of ‘strategies’)

‘Cognitive load’ vs. ‘Cognitive effort’ (1)

‘Cognitive pressure’ is salient in SI (and in consecutive interpreting):

Perceived **effortfulness** by interpreters

Grasping its nature and measuring it is more problematic

Relative differences can be generated deliberately
(increase/decrease the ‘difficulty of a text by various means),
but

‘absolute value’?

‘**Cognitive load**’ has been proposed as a metaphor

Many definitions, including

“proportion of attentional resources engaged in a task”

But ‘attentional resources’ is a construct, not (yet?) a ‘real’ entity,

A construct defined in terms of another construct

‘Cognitive load’ vs. ‘Cognitive effort’ (2)

Performance measurements, physiological measurements

Proposed as *objective* measurements

(Errors and omissions, time lag, hesitations, pupil dilation, skin resistance...)

They can be objective indeed. But **what do they measure?**

Cognitive load? No, what they measure is an activity,

This **activity is determined** by:

- The **task** itself, in particular its intersubjective ‘difficulty’

(intuitively: ‘cognitive load’)

- The **capacity** of the task performer

(relevant knowledge, skills, tactics, strategies)

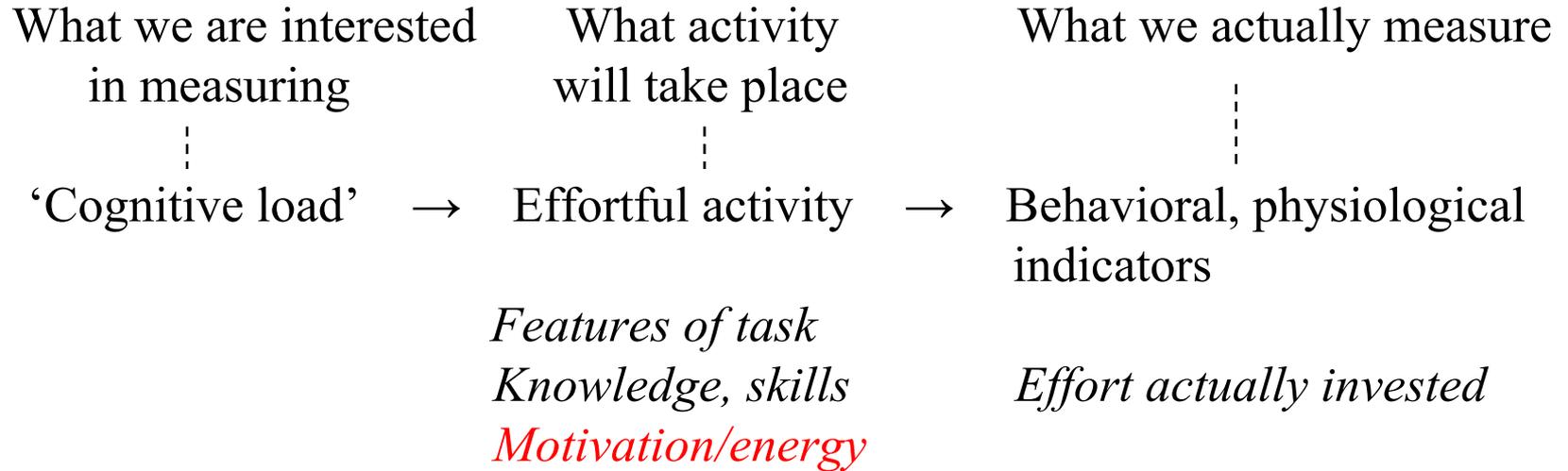
- The **effort actually invested** in the task

(if not motivated, less effort actually invested even if the task is more difficult)

*In interpreting, sometimes give up on part of the message and/or
on language quality*

Introspective evidence (e.g. Ewa Gumul’s studies)

‘Cognitive load’ vs. ‘Cognitive effort’ (3)



So, in interpreting, we *measure actual cognitive effort*
(through indicators)

But we do not necessarily know the correlation
between what is measured and ‘cognitive load’

Sometimes probably strong
Sometimes weak?

Hence the usefulness of making a distinction
between ‘cognitive load’ and ‘cognitive effort’

‘Deverbalization’ (1)

Initially, Danica Seleskovitch (ESIT, Paris) postulated:

Comprehension → Disappearance from memory of linguistic form of Source Speech → Reformulation

Probably (no references given) an extrapolation of experiments by psycholinguists which showed that memory of sentence structure faded rapidly after clause boundaries.

‘**Deverbalization**’ (term coined by Seleskovitch’s disciples): *‘total disappearance’ of traces of linguistic form of the source speech, replaced by language-independent mental representation of ‘sense’ ?*

Ambiguity: Is this spontaneous? Deliberate? Not clear in ESIT literature.

Soon re-interpreted as **dissociation of the languages** in reformulation

‘Deverbalization’ (2)

Among researchers, *polemical discussions* about ‘deverbalization’

Total disappearance of linguistic form?

Is this plausible? Challenged even within ESIT

What exactly is ‘deverbalization’?

- Spontaneous, deliberate cognitive process?
- Can you ‘deliberately’ erase something from memory within seconds?
- Or is it a methodological interpreting principle?

If the latter (*dissociation of languages*), not very problematic

Wide intersubjective consensus among conference interpreters that this is good policy in most cases

If the former, problematic

Many studies conducted around it

No solid clear-cut answer – but is such an answer necessary?

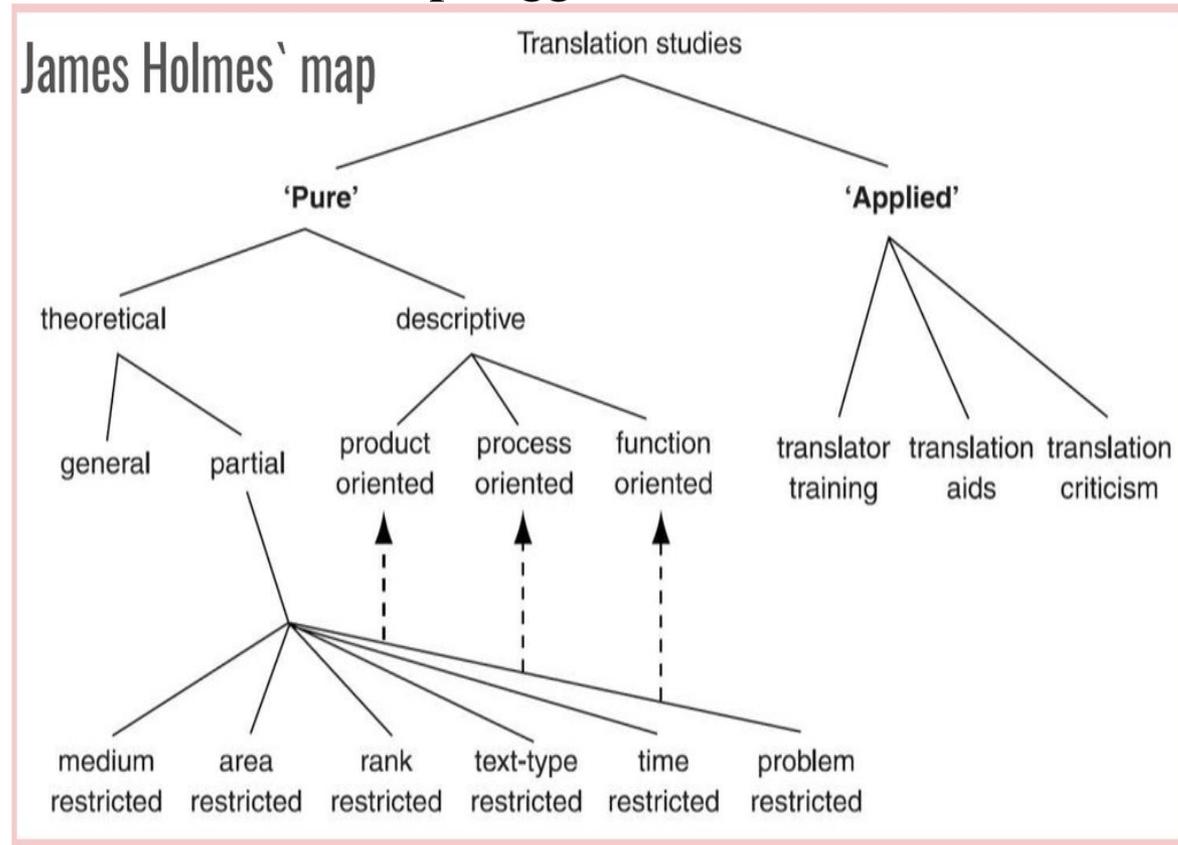
Problems due to lack of scientific training of authors of the concept (?)

Conclusion (1)

Some terminological distinctions do not contribute to research *directly* –
but they may contribute indirectly

**Conceptual-analysis based taxonomies w/ associated terms
can help trigger/foster research**

e.g.



Conclusion (2)

When do terminological distinctions **matter most**?

- When they **draw the attention** of researchers to
‘new’ entities... *and trigger more research*

e.g. ‘*Tightrope Hypothesis*’

(the hypothesis that interpreters work close to cognitive saturation)

- When they **clarify relationships** between entities
and **prevent confusions**

e.g. ‘*cognitive load*’ vs. ‘*cognitive effort*’

But their usefulness in a scientific community also depends on
how many researchers use them

(science is a collective endeavor)

If you believe a terminological distinction is justified,
support it by using it, even if it is contrary to common usage

(recalling the definitions if necessary)

Thank you for your attention

