



Book Review

Dastyar, V. (2017). *Dictionary of research methodologies in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. Tabriz: Zaban Academic Publishing.

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DOI: 10.12807/ti.109201.2017.r01

This Dictionary is a valiant effort to guide (primarily Iranian) students around the conceptual maze of research methodology in Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS). It competes with (a) the internet, and (b) existing guides to methodology in TIS research. Under (b), influential recent publications have been Saldanha & O'Brien (2014) and Hale & Napier (2013), both of which this Dictionary draws on frequently. I imagine that for some entries readers will be encouraged to seek more information from such more specialized publications, and of course from the internet. In other cases, they may find that the Dictionary can make complex concepts clearer.

There are over 300 entries in all, from **Abduction** to **Within-subject design**, followed by an extensive bibliography of works on methodology with particular reference to translation and interpreting. Iranian students will appreciate the fact that the headwords of all entries are given in Persian as well as English, and there are bidirectional glossaries of these headwords at the end of the book. This Dictionary has thus been an ambitious project. There are linguistic and typographical slips, but I will comment on some more interesting problems here.

One problem has to do with how concepts are presented. Each entry describes the concept in question in some way, usually with some reference to the TIS literature, and often adds a comment or two. Many of the entries are clear and helpful, such as the entry for the **Hawthorne effect**. The effect is first said to be something that threatens the internal validity of research, and then the author cites Saldanha & O'Brien: [the effect occurs] "when subjects alter (usually improve) their normal behavior because they are aware that they are being studied". But compare Wikipedia: "The **Hawthorne effect** (also referred to as the **observer effect**) is a type of reactivity in which individuals modify an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed." Note that the Wikipedia version has the form of a classical Aristotelian definition of a species (X) that is stated to belong to a genus (Y), and is distinguished from other species of the same genus by certain given

features (in other words: an X is a Y which...). The Dictionary formulation is looser, and is preceded by an introductory comment.

In this particular case, the looser formulation is not a problem, but sometimes the reader who does not know a concept may remain puzzled. Take, for instance, the entry for **Bibliometric research**:

This is a type of research increasingly applied to TIS. According to [reference], bibliometric research is ‘appropriate for conducting partial or topical analyses, for instance, when focusing on specific sub-fields’.

This functional definition is followed by a couple of comments on potential weaknesses of such research. But a simple classical definition could have helpfully been given first, such as Wikipedia’s “Bibliometrics is statistical analysis of written publications, such as books or articles”.

Another example: the entry for **Contextual inquiry** reads as follows (in citations I do not follow the author’s convention of setting cross-referenced terms in capitals).

According to Saldanha & O’Brien (2014), contextual inquiry ‘involves observation of a participant while a standard task is being performed in a naturalistic setting’.

True, this research method does have this feature; but the actual definition those authors give (p. 145) has the classical form:

Contextual inquiry is an ethnographic technique where researchers observe and interview participants in their natural working environment.

Wouldn’t something like that have been a better entry?

Some of the comments in the entries are helpful, for instance with suggestions of critical viewpoints. But sometimes the comment itself might raise a query. One case where a reader may need to seek enlightenment elsewhere is **rANOVA**, for which the entry lacks a clarifying comment to the effect that the “r” stands for “repeated measures”. Elsewhere, I was mystified by the comment that **Sample** is “also known as human population”. And by the comment [reference] that one of the disadvantages of a **Unidirectional parallel corpus** is that it may hide “the specific choices and strategies adopted by different translators”. How can this be true, I wondered, if this kind of corpus contains lots of translations by different translators? The (accurate) definition given for such a corpus does not specify a single translator. The referenced source of the citation in question, I discovered, is actually making the point that such corpora would do well to include as many translations of the *same source text* as possible: a point the author has missed.

And sometimes the whole entry is no more than a comment, like this one for **Claim**:

Conducting research within a well-defined design, using appropriate methods and working with logical methodological rigor may contribute to substantiation of the claim(s) the researcher makes.

A different kind of problem is raised by the author’s selective use of source references. On many occasions, a single reference is given, suggesting the inference that the view mentioned is somehow the widely accepted,

standard one. But this is not always the case. The entries for **Induction** and **Deduction** mention Pierce and Tymoczko, but neither of these can be considered primary sources for these long-established concepts. The concept of **Assessment** is said to be “at the heart of any theory of translation”, with one reference; but such a view would seem to exclude Descriptive Translation Studies, historical research, and much else besides. Or consider the entry for **Ipsative assessment**, which is defined (with one reference) as “a type of assessment in which [...] the student engages in self-assessment”. Yes; but the internet informs me that there is also another, and common, meaning of this term, referring to the practice of comparing a subject’s present performance to the same subject’s previous performance. Or take this entry, for **Psychometric research**:

This is a type of research which, according to [reference], is ‘carried out by the collection of data through an experiment, and the analysis of that data through the use of inferential statistics’.

But surely the main feature of this kind of research is its subject matter: personality traits and attitudes – as indeed indicated in the following entry, for **Psychometric test**. The problem of offering too narrow reference contexts is also illustrated by the entry for **Circular argument**, which is said to be a common pitfall in Critical Discourse Analysis, with respect to circularity between assumptions and data. But why limit its applicability to this research method? The well-known fallacy of course has a much older pedigree and a wider application than that. The Wikipedia entry is clearer and simpler: a circular argument is “a logical fallacy in which the reasoner begins with what they are trying to end with”. The entries for **Bottom-up** and **Top-down** are also linked specifically to Critical Discourse Analysis although these concepts too have a much wider scope.

In conclusion, I salute the author’s evident desire to contribute to TIS in the Iranian context. Internationally, some have lamented the fact that TIS itself lacks a standard terminology of our subject matter, while others delight in our conceptual variety. As regards the many research methodologies of the field, there is perhaps more agreement on concepts and terms. This Dictionary aims to contribute towards increasing such agreement, and it has reminded me of the ever-present need for conceptual and terminological carefulness. It also illustrates the seemingly inevitable role of English as a lingua franca of academia, seen here in a book that responds primarily to an evident local need in a non-Anglophone country.

References

- Hale, S. B. & Napier, J. (2013). *Research methods in interpreting: A practical resource*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Saldanha, G. & O’Brien, S. (2014). *Research methodologies in Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.