THE USE OF SOCIAL SURVEYS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES. METHODOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS[1]

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Abstract

Translation is an activity carried out by professionals – in some cases after a period of formal training – who are employed or self-employed, and whose work is destined for translation users. Translators, translator trainees, employers of translators, and translation users are four clearly defined social groups within the translation industry that may be the subject of study using one of the methods most frequently used within the field of social sciences: the social survey.

This paper presents the characteristics of the social survey methodology. It also analyses and evaluates the use of social surveys in the field of Translation Studies when preparing to introduce changes in academic curricula, defining professional competencies or obtaining opinions regarding the quality of interpreting and subtitling.

Resumen

La traducción es una actividad desempeñada por un colectivo laboral y profesional (los traductores), en algunos casos con un proceso formativo previo, a cargo de empleadores, y dirigida a usuarios de la traducción. Estos cuatro colectivos (traductores, alumnos de traducción, empleadores y usuarios), con características sociales bien definidas, son colectivos susceptibles de ser estudiados con uno de los métodos de investigación más frecuentes en las ciencias sociales: la encuesta.

En el presente artículo se dan a conocer las características metodológicas de la encuesta de tipo social. Se ejemplifica y valora su aplicación en la Traductología en diversos tipos de estudios: estudios orientados a preparar reformas universitarias, a detectar competencias profesionales y a recoger opiniones en torno a la calidad de la interpretación y subtitulación.

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1. This article is the English version of "El uso de la encuesta de tipo social en traductología. Características metodológicas" by Anna Kuznik, Amparo Hurtado Albir & Anna Espinal Berenguer. It was not published on the print version of *MonTI* for reasons of space. The online version of *MonTI* does not suffer from these limitations, and this is our way of promoting plurilingualism.

1. The survey as a social research method

Since time immemorial human beings have gathered all sorts of information about the attitudes, opinions, customs and specific incidents that exist within a particular territory. Nowadays, surveys have become a key tool for studying social relationships. Political, economic and social organisations use this instrument as an essential technique to determine the behaviour of their interest groups and to then make decisions about them. Due to its widespread frequent use, the survey is the most representative social analysis technique.

1.1. Definition and methodological characteristics of surveys

The survey is a data collection technique, that is to say, a specific, particular and practical kind of research procedure. It belongs to the non-experimental designs of empirical research that are typical of quantitative strategies, since it allows the data that are found to be structured and quantified, and then the results can be generalised to the whole of the population under study. These data can be collected following an established protocol, selecting only the information of interest from real-life situations by means of questions put together as a questionnaire (the instrument surveys employ to collect data). It is a kind of interdisciplinary research *par excellence*, owing to its broad scope, the requirements that must be satisfied by all field research and the statistical analysis of data.

If we compare surveys with the other three data collection techniques (interviews, discussion groups and direct observation), they represent the most appropriate method for use in studies that aim to collect extensive amounts of information from large populations, where statistical representativeness and the mathematical processing of data are sought. Surveys offer a number of advantages, such as simplification of reality, the wide range of possible ways of processing data and the known degree of representativeness. Their biggest shortcomings consist in the fact that they provide a simplified, superficial image of the real-life situation based on fragmented and decontextualised data that do not allow the phenomena under study to be viewed in a comprehensive manner. From the practical point of view, they are the most fragile data collection technique because, being both lengthy and costly, they can fail at many stages of the implementation process. This disadvantage is further aggravated by the fact that once application has begun, they cannot be altered during the data collection process, and this is what makes the survey such a rigid technique (Cea D'Ancona 1996, Valles 1997, Quivy and Campenhoudt 2005).

Surveys are non-experimental in nature because no independent variables are defined: instead the aim is to collect information only about the dependent variables. These dependent variables are the aspects and topics of interest that are to be studied, and which are defined in the theoretical framework of each survey. After operationalising the dependent variables (factors or parameters of study), they are turned into the questions that appear in the questionnaires.

In this vein a great deal of attention must be paid to the two main elements in a survey, i.e. the design of the sample and the drafting of the questionnaire. The sample and the questionnaire are two of the keystones on which every survey rests. This condition is reflected in some of the definitions of survey that have been put forward to date. An example is the proposal by León and Montero, who define it as "a study aimed at determining characteristics of a population of subjects by means of a set of questions" (our translation) (León and Montero 1993: 98). In this same line we also find the definition put forward by Arnau, for whom surveys comprise:

> a set of techniques and instruments for gathering data that allow a large number of dependent variables to be recorded or measured without actively manipulating the conditions under which the phenomena or independent variables are produced. (our translation) (Arnau 1995: 41)

In addition to being a data collection technique, surveys have also become a very common method of social research. This popularity is a result of their great versatility, the wide range of fields they can be applied in and their capacity to describe the characteristics of the social groups under study, as well as to draw conclusions that can be extended to all those social groups.

There are many different kinds of surveys. López Romo (1998), for example, proposed a typology based on ten criteria. Taking this proposal as our starting point, we put forward the following classification of surveys by grouping these ten criteria into three blocks, i.e. aspects related with: the general design of the study, the population and the sample, and the data collection instrument (Table 1).

According to the general design of the study	
Area of interest of the findings (or field of application)	- Marketing - Mass media and advertising - Public opinion (the citizen's political behaviour) - Health care - Culture and society (academic studies) - Organisations (behaviour of moral bodies or business-to-business surveys) - Demographics
Topics addressed	- Values - Needs, likes and interests - Knowledge - Attitudes and images - Opinions - Intentions - Conduct, uses, habits - Demographic data
Purpose (aims pursued)	- Strategic survey, of an exploratory nature. Wide range of information for designing and planning an activity. - Tactical survey, of a conclusive nature. Specific information for developing (implementing) projects or assessing and following up (monitoring) projects that have already been undertaken.
Frequency	- Unitary survey (unique in time). - Follow-up survey (topics explored over time). Independent samples each time (cross-sectional design) or the same sample all the time (longitudinal or panel design).

Methodological approach (level of knowledge a survey seeks to attain)	- Exploratory survey. Aims: to obtain a preliminary appraisal of the phenomenon or topic under study; to identify general characteristics of the problem; to establish working hypotheses; to identify the categories of analysis or the conceptual framework; to provide ideas about the design of samples and statistical calculations. Few cases are studied; representative or non-representative sample (judgement sample); open questions. - Descriptive survey. Aims: to describe with precision – usually with percentages and averages – the characteristics of the phenomena that are observed; as a result of this description, to identify and quantify with precision the significance of each of the aspects studied in the exploratory stage that may or may not be related with a working hypothesis; to determine the significant aspects. Representative sample. - Explanatory (evaluative) survey. Aims: to describe the frequency with which a phenomenon occurs in association with another one; to point out relations among the factors that comprise a phenomenon, without establishing the causality. Representative sample. - Causal survey. Aims: to mark a causal relationship among the variables. Combined survey with an experimental or quasi-experimental design. In the strict sense of the term: only experimental designs allow this causal relationship to be established among the variables. Rigorously selected sample.
Destination of the information (sponsoring)	- *Ad hoc* survey (a sponsor or single client requests the study and covers all the costs involved in it). - Multi-client or syndicated surveys (they offer information of interest to a wider public; results are shared by several users, who also share the costs involved). - Survey to be made public (academic purposes; the purpose is the knowledge in itself).
According to the population and the sample	
Unit studied (unit of analysis)	- Consumers or users (marketing). - Audience (mass media). - Citizens (public opinion studies). - Population (demographic, cultural and social surveys study people as members of groups). - Business organisations (marketing studies business establishments that distribute products or services). - Organisations (industrial marketing surveys or those carried out in order to understand macrosocial behaviour study economic, political or social institutions; the unit of analysis is the organisation but a qualified informant is chosen to represent the interests and viewpoint of the institution).
Type of sampling (from the statistical point of view)	- Probabilistic sampling (representative sample of the population). - Non-probabilistic sampling (exploratory survey).
According to the data collection instrument (questionnaire)	
Way of recording the information	- Pencil and paper-type questionnaire (by interviewer or self-application). - Automated aids (CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interview, CAPI – Computer Assisted Personal Interview).
Type of administration	- Face-to-face administration. - Over-the-phone administration. - By traditional post. - By email.

Table 1. Typology of surveys (based on López Romo 1998)

Surveys allow for all the possible types of triangulation mentioned by Denzin (1970, cit. in Flick 2004: 178 and in Hurtado Albir and Alves 2009: 70), who focuses on triangulation as a mutual validation strategy and identifies four basic forms:

(1) Triangulation of data sources. Data obtained from different sources are combined: these sources may be different moments (time), different places (space) or different informants (people).

(2) Triangulation of researchers. Data obtained by different researchers are combined in order to avoid possible bias resulting from individual subjectivity from each of them.

(3) Triangulation of theories. Different theories, hypotheses or theoretical points of view on the same dataset are combined. This allows the explanatory power of the observed phenomenon to be evaluated by means of different theories.

(4) Methodological triangulation. This is the fundamental concept of Denzin, who distinguishes between "intra-method" triangulation (that is, within the same method) and triangulation between different methods, as well as combining the qualitative and quantitative strategies.[2] This latter form of triangulation (between different methods) continues to be the most common way of understanding methodological triangulation. This is also how triangulation is understood in the field of Translation Studies, that is to say, as "a multi-methodological perspective which aims at explaining a given phenomenon from several vantage points combining quantitative and qualitative methods" (Munday 2009: 237; an entry in the glossary by Hurtado Albir and Alves).

Surveys are a costly, time-consuming and laborious method of research. All the operations involved in carrying them out have a very high cost, i.e. designing and collecting data for a reliable database; designing and creating or purchasing databases about the chosen population; and finally maintaining and keeping them up-to-date. Sending out the surveys, receiving the answers, reading and analysing the data, and writing up the final report is also usually a laborious and costly procedure.

1.2. Studies of social groups: sample and sampling

We have already discussed how selecting the sample is one of the two essential keystones within the survey technique (the other being the design of the questionnaire). Different authors refer to the set of elements that are to be studied with the survey by means of the concept of universe, population or social group. Ander-Egg noted that a distinction can be made between (hypothetical) universe and population: "the first term is used to designate a set of elements, beings or objects, and the second refers to a set of numbers obtained by measuring and counting certain characteristics displayed by them" (our translation) (1990: 179). Universe would therefore be a more hypothetical, abstract and indefinite concept in contrast to population, which would be more concrete in terms of the numerical definition of the characteristics of interest inherent to the population under study.

It is not always necessary to examine an entire social group when conducting a research study – a representative sample of the group is enough for such purposes. This sample is chosen using a set of specific procedures (sampling techniques) and by studying it conclusions can be drawn that can be extended to the whole population. This results in substantial savings in costs, greater accuracy and speedier performance.

Sampling techniques make use of information gathered from a census carried out on the social group beforehand, that is to say, a list that includes all the elements about the population under study (census, electoral register, catalogue, list, map, plan). Ander-Egg called it the "sampling base" ("sampling frame" for López Romo 1998) and also considered cases in which no such prior sampling base exists and therefore has to be constituted ad hoc, since not all social groups have been included in a census or catalogued.

Depending on whether the researcher decides to use qualitative or quantitative strategies in the study, s/he will choose the criterion that enables him or her to ensure that the sample represents a cross-section of the social group. In the case of qualitative strategies, the criterion is

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2. It is increasingly more common for researchers to stress the importance of treating the quantitative and qualitative strategies as complementary approaches and of providing multimethod (mixed methods) research designs that integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods (Bericat 1998, Creswell 2003, Verd and López 2008).

usually theoretical, whereas for quantitative strategies (the case of surveys) the criterion is normally statistical, or probabilistic.

Non-probabilistic samples, which are selected according to a theoretical criterion involving the identification of profiles, do not necessarily possess all the characteristics of the population where they were obtained and it is impossible to calculate their degree of error. This kind of sample is used for exploratory purposes, when there is no intention of extending the results to the whole social group (López Romo 1998). Data collected from non-probabilistic samples are analysed with the tools available from descriptive statistics.

Among the non-probabilistic sampling techniques that can be used, Cea D'Ancona (2004) mentions strategic or judgement sampling and circumstantial sampling. Strategic (judgement) sampling "depends on the belief that [the population units] can provide information of interest or that is relevant to the aims of the study" (our translation) (Cea D'Ancona 2004: 171). In very small samples (fewer than 30 cases, for example), strategic sampling can make it easier to obtain information that is more significant than that acquired from a sample of the same size taken at random from the study population. Circumstantial sampling (as Cea D'Ancona, 2004, calls it) facilitates access to information, since only volunteers who wish to take part in the study participate. This type of sampling includes a variant that is known as snowball sampling, in which "the units of the sample are chosen, successively, from references given by existing study subjects" (our translation) (Cea D'Ancona 2004: 172). This type of sampling is very useful in surveys conducted on marginal populations. Cea D'Ancona also points out that non-probabilistic sampling is very common when a pre-test of the questionnaire is to be carried out, as well as in studies in which the shortage of resources (doctoral dissertations and academic research versus commercial research) and the absence of reliable sampling frames make it impossible to use any of the probabilistic sampling techniques.

On the other hand, however, for a sample to be statistically representative (probabilistic) it has to fulfil two basic principles (López Romo 1998):

(1) All the elements of the social group must have a chance of being included in the sample. In this case, the researcher must ensure that all the elements that make up the population have a chance of being chosen. If, due to the way the sample is selected, any of the elements that make up the universe no longer have any chance of being chosen, then at the same time the possibility of representing the characteristics of that element is also ruled out (the characteristics of the eliminated element are not represented).

(2) The probability of each element being included in the sample must be known. This probability is defined as the odds an element has of being chosen. In contrast, the opposite of probability is defined as the representation factor of each element, that is to say, the number of cases that it represents. Hence, this requirement of a representative sample is fulfilled if the representation factor is known.

As we can see, a prerequisite of the second principle mentioned above is that we must know, at least approximately, the size of the population so as to be able to define the representation factor of the elements of the sample. This requirement is often not explicitly stated in the case of hypothetical universes (which are different from populations) that lack a numerical definition of the characteristics of the population under study (not even an approximate idea of its size is known).

As far as the type of selection of probabilistic samples is concerned, the most frequently used techniques are the simple random technique, random PPS (probability proportional to size) and quota selection (proportional samples) (López Romo 1998: 58).

2. Studies with social surveys in Translation Studies

In this section we present several studies conducted in Translation Studies that use surveys as the method of social research. Our compilation is in no way meant to be complete, and in fact our intention is just to offer some examples (perhaps the most illustrative) of this new

methodological genre in the discipline. Our review covers studies published between 1992 and 2005.

We grouped these studies into two broad subject areas: surveys aimed at helping training to fit the requirements of the labour market (Golden et al. 1992, Mackenzie 2000, Li 2000, Calvo Encinas 2004, Lim 2005), and surveys whose purpose is to gather information about the perception of social groups as regards the quality of interpreting and subtitling (Chiaro and Nocella 2004, Widler 2004).

The following criteria were used to select the studies:

(1) Typological variety, in order to provide examples for the different types of survey, compiled by López Romo (see Table 1). This provides us with an extremely varied map of the main design elements of the surveys: object of study, aims, hypotheses, population, sampling, geographic area under study, and so forth.

(2) Sponsoring. All the surveys analysed here were conducted in the academic rather than the business domain. Surveys sponsored by a commercial enterprise and with restricted access do not usually have an elaborate theoretical framework because it is thought that the sponsor replaces the theoretical framework with his or her own aims and interests. The theoretical framework is therefore implicit in commissioning the survey. An example of a recent survey commissioned outside the academic sphere is the survey conducted by the Spanish Association of Translation Companies (*Agrupación de Centros especializados en Traducción* – ACT 2005).

(3) Centrality and self-sufficiency of the survey method. All the studies selected are based upon this method. Thus, studies that use questionnaire-based data collection, for example in the preparatory phase, to select the sample for the study and thus ensure that all the subjects meet the same criteria (e.g. PACTE 2005 and 2008) are excluded. Neither shall we discuss studies based on structured interviews (e.g. Hermans and Lambert 1998).

In the publications we cite here, the studies conducted are not described in a uniform manner, since sometimes there are methodological data missing or those that are provided are difficult to interpret univocally. The breadth and depth of analysis of each study are also very different. Thus, and despite our wish to unify our presentation, it has not always been possible to structure it in the same way.

2.1. Surveys conducted to adjust training to the realities of the labour market

2.1.1. Golden, Hurtado Albir and Piqué (1992)

From the bibliographical references that were consulted, the first survey in the field of Translation Studies in Spain was started in the year 1988 by the *Escola Universitària de Traductors i d'Intèrprets* (EUTI) at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (Golden et al. 1992).

The study was part of a more extensive project aimed at describing the situation of translation and interpreting (T&I) in Catalonia so as to gain a deeper understanding of that market. This information would then be used to adapt the new university curricula that were going to be introduced in the academic year 1992-1993 (which involved transforming "diplomas" into 1st and 2nd cycle degree courses). Its objectives were, on the one hand, descriptive (to understand the situation of the T&I market in terms of the existing supply and demand, as well as to study the specific characteristics of T&I in a bilingual milieu). On the other hand, they were also pedagogical (to provide guidelines for drawing up new programmes of study for the T&I degree) and pragmatic (to compile a database of translators and interpreters in Catalonia).

The study consisted of two surveys targeted towards two different social groups and conducted in two different years:

(1) First social group: employers of translators, users of translation and interpreting services, representatives of the professional demand from the public and private sectors (town councils; public, autonomic, state and foreign administration offices; public and private businesses; professional associations and publishers).
(2) Second social group: translators and interpreters in Catalonia, as representatives of the supply of labour.

The researchers decided to conduct the second survey (among translators) due to the very low response rate obtained in the first study. The response rate of the first social group (employers of translators) was 3.96% while that of the second group (translators) was 23.53%.

In both cases the survey consisted in sending out a questionnaire with multiple-choice and open questions, along with other documents, using the traditional postage service. One of the main aims of this survey was to collect socio-professional data about the subjects because at that time there was a great deal of interest in creating a database of translators and interpreters in Catalonia. It was also one of the first signs within the discipline pointing to the need to produce up-to-date databases.

No probabilistic sampling technique was applied to select the sample. Data from the institutions of interest were collected previously in a database (using the electronic program dBASE IV). The survey was not anonymous and gathered information about the institution involved in the survey, although no data were collected about informants or their role or position in that institution.

The profile of a translator and interpreter was studied from the point of view of users of translation as regards the following topics: how often translation and interpreting were needed; types of texts most commonly translated; situations and areas of knowledge with the greatest demand for interpreting; frequency with which the services of professional translators and interpreters are sought in comparison to non-experts; and the situation of the translator and interpreter in private enterprises and public organisations.

With regard to the description of the supply, the following topics were addressed: profile of translators and interpreters (training and specialisation); degree of professional dedication; employment status; type of texts most commonly translated; situations and topics that most frequently require interpreting; most common language combinations; and distribution of native tongues (Spanish versus Catalan).

The results were analysed in terms of percentages for the two social groups. Some of the conclusions reached are expressed in the following descriptive statements:

(1) Predominance of written translation over interpreting (96%).
(2) Shortage of professionals who are dedicated only to interpreting (it is mostly combined with the written mode).
(3) A high volume of literary texts and essays translated above all into Catalan in comparison to texts of a non-literary profile (technical, scientific, administrative, audiovisual translations, for example).
(4) Predominance of topics related to medicine, politics and economics in interpreting.
(5) Large demand for translations between Spanish and Catalan (a language combination that is not recognised for employment purposes).
(6) Job insecurity in the profession of both translator and interpreter because, on the one hand, it does not enjoy the degree of recognition it deserves from the institutions that call for translations in the first place and, on the other, very few translators and interpreters belong to professional associations.

2.1.2. Mackenzie (2000)

The survey conducted by Mackenzie at the University of Turku is part of a wider project entitled *Practical Orientation of Studies in Translation and Interpreting* (POSI) (Mackenzie 2000), which arose from the need to improve graduates' preparation for a career in translation and interpreting in Germany. The project then spread to several other European countries. In

Finland, for example, the POSI research group was made up of five representatives from Finnish universities that offer T&I degrees, three representatives from the *Finnish Associations of Translators and Interpreters, Translation Companies and Professional Translators* and one representative from the users of translation services: Nokia Communications.

The technique used to collect data was a survey with a questionnaire. As in previous studies of this type (Golden et al. 1992, Hermans and Lambert 1998), two different social groups were analysed:

(1) First social group: users of translation services represented by 48 of the largest enterprises in Finland (chosen from a list of 500), 53 exporting and importing SMEs from the region of Turku, 11 ministries, one information office of the State Council, and the administrative offices of 10 town councils of the largest cities in Finland.

(2) Second social group: suppliers of translation services, represented by 22 translation companies (20 of them members of the Finnish Association of Translation Companies), 212 translators and interpreters (members of the Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters; 110 of them lived in Finland and 102 were living in other European countries; some of them worked as collaborators with the European Union). Furthermore, three questionnaires were sent out to the supervisors of translation and interpreting services of the European Union for them to hand out among the translators involved.

As emerges from the publication, no probabilistic sampling technique was carried out. The questionnaire was pilot-tested among translation students.

The aim of the survey was to gather opinions from the two above-mentioned populations as regards:

(1) What skills and abilities they consider to be the most important in today's market from both the users' and the suppliers' points of view.

(2) What skills and abilities, in the users' opinion, are lacking in the career training currently given to recently employed translators.

(3) Whether translators are satisfied with the training that they have received and what they think was missing.

(4) How translators' training could be improved, according to the users of translation services.

(5) What type of continuous training could be offered to translators.

The questions included in the two questionnaires referred directly to the knowledge and skills related with translation tasks without contextualising, operationalising or exemplifying these concepts. In addition, because it was a study conducted chiefly for educational purposes, it focused on translators who were trained in specialised centres and left out those who were self-taught or who came from other types of learning backgrounds.

In this study we want to highlight two points that we consider to be very interesting:

(1) Awareness of the twofold status of translation companies on the market, which act as intermediaries between translators and the final consumer and are thus both suppliers (as regards the final user) and users of translation services (as regards the centres where translators are trained).

(2) Awareness of the informant's role within the organisation, since the authors of the study took into account the job hierarchy that exists within companies and institutions.

2.1.3. Li (2000)

In October 1998, Li (2000), a researcher at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, conducted a study among professional translators in order to find out their job needs, to know their opinion regarding the translator training they had received and to gather ideas concerning the profiles of continuous training in translation that are needed most. These three specific aims were included

within one main objective, namely, to determine the social needs present in the labour market, with a view to improving translator training.

The study was made up of two parts:

(1) A survey aimed at 42 professional translators from Hong Kong: 24 of them were official translators for the Chinese government, 16 were translators from private companies (dedicated to translating or not) and two translators for the police force.
(2) Semi-structured interviews with 12 translators from the same sample as the one used in the survey.

No probabilistic sampling technique was used to select the sample for the survey. For the semi-structured interviews, 12 subjects with different ages, experience and training were chosen so that they therefore presented all the socio-professional profiles included in the sample.

The survey yielded quantitative data and the in-depth semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data. All these data were analysed jointly following a principle of analytic induction. This means that no working hypotheses are posited prior to the study; instead the data are analysed *a posteriori* and overall descriptive conclusions are drawn from them. These conclusions were then presented as ranges and percentages.

The questionnaire contained 44 questions grouped in three parts: personal information about the informant; experience in translating and interpreting; and perception and evaluation of training in translation and interpreting. There were both closed (multiple choice) and open questions.

Of the 65 questionnaires sent out, 42 completed questionnaires were sent back (response rate 64.6% – a very high rate). The semi-structured interviews (which included standardised, open and free questions) were recorded and then transcribed.

The translators' social needs concerning the following issues were studied:

(1) What was the most useful course you did during your university training in translation and interpreting? Predominant answer: English language and literature.
(2) What area did you feel you had the best preparation in when you began working as a translator? Predominant answer: competence in English and Chinese languages.
(3) What is the greatest challenge in a translator's job? Predominant answer: finding the right style for each text genre in English, and interpreting.
(4) What changes do you notice in the translation market? Predominant answers: more translations from Chinese into English; more summary translations; and more translations related with mainland China.
(5) What would you most like to learn if you had the chance to take part in in-service training? Predominant answer: English language and literature.

The discussion of the results obtained focuses above all on the last question and marks out possible ways of developing training by carrying out real-life translation jobs.

2.1.4. Calvo Encinas (2004)

In the year 2000 Calvo Encinas (2004) conducted a survey dealing with community interpreting, as part of her doctor's degree studies at the *Universidad de Granada*.

The survey was exploratory and it was conducted using a qualitative approach. The territory included in the study was the province of Toledo (Spain). The population chosen for study consisted of civil servants working in the Public Administration.

Its general aim was to study the needs and perceptions of the Authorities as regards the subject of community interpreting. The specific objectives of the study included the following:

- To analyse whether respondents recognised the need for the permanent and/or institutionalised support of interpreters at the provincial level – something that could ensure a better service than the one that is currently available.

- To collect the impressions of civil servants working in the State Administrative offices in the sample province [Toledo] regarding the difficulties they themselves have when it comes to dealing with individuals who do not speak Spanish.
- To analyse the knowledge that is currently available about the concept of community interpreting.
- To define the profile of the ideal community interpreter or professional linguist in each case. (our translation) (Calvo Encinas 2004: 8)

Two criteria were followed in choosing the province of Toledo to represent Spain: it had to be one of the 10 Spanish provinces with the highest immigration rates and one of the inland provinces with the greatest numbers of tourists.

The sample was made up of 60 government-employed informants working in different areas of the State Administrative offices (Police Headquarters, Law offices, Local Education Authority, Social Welfare, Employment Office, Hospitals, Tax Office, Toledo City Council, Trade Unions, and several NGOs). No probabilistic sampling technique was applied. The following two criteria were used to select the informants: the civil servants had to be in genuine, direct contact with members of the public and they had to have a thorough knowledge of the situation, without really taking into account their position in the hierarchy of the administration.

The technique used for collecting data was a questionnaire which the interviewer completed in the presence of the respondent during his or her field work. Several pilot designs were produced before a valid questionnaire was finally reached. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of three blocks of questions: the first described the respondent's profile; the second sought to analyse the state of the art according to the respondent; and the third was aimed at obtaining answers in more specific occupational areas (State Police Forces and Health Centres).

One point that should be highlighted here is the large amount of work carried out before the study actually began in order to gather information about the institutions involved in the survey, as well as the informant's actual position in the organisation. One of the questions from the first block of questions collects information about the civil servant's position, although it seems that, for the data analysis, the categories that these positions belong to are not considered to be relevant.

Among other issues, the results draw attention to the fact that none of the individuals in the sample understood the concepts of "social interpreting", "liaison interpreting" and "community interpreting".

2.1.5. Lim (2005)

In March 2004, Lim began a survey among students studying the first and second years of Korean–English interpreting at the Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea (Lim 2005). Lim's work was based on previous research conducted by Li (2002, cit. in Lim 2005).[3]

The study followed an exploratory approach, with no probabilistic sampling technique and a high response rate, owing to the fact that the population was made up of students.

The survey was conducted among first- and second-year students with the aim of examining their expectations, opinions and needs as regards their interpreting course. The findings would then be used to help improve the designs of the curricula in the school of translation.

Of the 56 questionnaires given out to first-year students, 44 were completed and returned (response rate: 79%), while second-year students answered and returned 44 of the 52 questionnaires that were sent out to them (response rate: 85%).

In addition to questions about the subjects' personal opinions and perceptions, the questionnaire also contained questions asking for information concerning their families. One of

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3. In this article we describe a survey-based study (see 2.1.3), combined with semi-structured interviews and conducted by Li in the year 1998 (Li 2000), in which the population that was studied consisted of translators. Lim (2005: 175) mentions another study by Li (2002) involving translation students and which was carried out using discussion groups, surveys and interviews.

the most obvious findings of this study was that it confirmed the suspicion that female students far outnumber their male counterparts on interpreting courses. A career in interpreting is a good way for Korean women to climb the social ladder. In contrast, this profession is of little interest to men because it does not carry the social prestige that could motivate them to become interpreters.

2.2. Surveys conducted to capture the perception of quality

2.2.1. Chiaro and Nocella (2004)

In October 2000, Chiaro and Nocella (2004) of the University of Bologna (Italy) launched a global online survey among professional interpreters in order to examine their perception of quality criteria in interpreting. It should be remarked that the theoretical framework drawn up by these authors prior to beginning the survey was very good.

The study was based on a review of three types of research conducted earlier by other authors which dealt with the perception of quality in interpreting: text analyses of transcriptions of interpreting sessions; field studies with final users (those attending and speaking at conferences); and empirical research with interpreters and students of interpreting. Chiaro and Nocella selected one of the research studies from the last group, carried out by Bühler (1986, cited in Chiaro and Nocella 2004: 282), which sought to capture interpreters' opinions regarding a set of 17 linguistic and extralinguistic quality criteria.

The sample consisted of 286 interpreters, whose email addresses were found on different websites. No probabilistic sampling technique was applied. Forty-four per cent of informants came from Western Europe, 27% were from Central and South America, 19% from North America, 5% from Eastern Europe and 5% from other countries.

The instrument used to collect data was a brief electronic questionnaire with two blocks of questions:

(1) The first block contained questions about the respondents' age, place of birth, training and work experience.
(2) The second block included questions based on Bühler's quality criteria in interpreting as well as on the findings of several discussions and interviews held with professional interpreters. Respondents had to say how they thought each criterion ranked from the least to the most important. Quality criteria were grouped as nine linguistic and eight extralinguistic criteria.

The results were analysed in terms of percentages but a multidimensional scaling (MDS) analysis was also applied using the STATISTICA software application for Windows. This allows the researcher to create a kind of two-dimensional evaluative and perceptive map, as a sort of geometrical arrangement. The map that was thus generated represents a summary of how informants perceived the linguistic quality criteria in interpreting, set out on two different scales: the horizontal axis representing the quality dimension and the vertical axis showing the structural dimension (Chiaro and Nocella 2004: 290).

The study allowed researchers to select the three linguistic quality criteria in interpreting most frequently pointed out by interpreters, i.e. "adequacy" to the original, integrity of the information, and its logical cohesion, which were classified *a posteriori* as essential quality criteria. The least frequently mentioned criteria were labelled "ornamental" criteria (tone of voice, accent, style).

In this study, data were collected using a questionnaire in a fully automated process. It could be said that these authors validated the widespread use of computers and the Internet for conducting surveys in our discipline. Thanks to the application of the new technologies, the authors were able to double the response rate among respondents (the rate for a traditional postage-based survey is around 10-15%), cut expenses and time, improve the quality of the questionnaires they received (the electronic format did not allow incorrectly completed questionnaires to be sent back) and gather data from the five continents. To be able to carry out

their research study, the authors had to work in collaboration with specialists in computer engineering and databases. Chiaro and Nocella acknowledge the fact that their research was multidisciplinary because they had to cooperate with specialists from other disciplines in order to conduct the survey.

2.2.2. Widler (2004)

Widler (2004) conducted an exploratory-type survey in Vienna (Austria) between August and September 2002. Her study was part of a broader research project entitled "Literary translation as multimedial communication", which was organised by the Faculty of Translation of the University of Vienna in collaboration with the Austrian Science Foundation (FWF). Apart from its being part of a larger study, Widler also recognised that specialists in statistical analysis and other colleagues had helped her carry out the interviews.

The sample examined in the study comprised 100 viewers of 19 films in nine different original-language versions (all subtitled in German) in seven cinemas in Vienna as well as at two summer film festival venues. Data about the films, cinemas and festivals were taken from *Der Standard* (an Austrian newspaper) and from *Falter* (a weekly guide to cultural events in Vienna). No probabilistic sampling technique was applied.

The study set out to explore and describe the universe of filmgoers who watched subtitled films in Vienna: Who are they? How old are they? What level of education and kind of profession do they have? How often do they watch subtitled films? Are they happy with the way they are subtitled?

The technique used to collect data was a questionnaire administered personally by the interviewer. The interviewers approached people who had just bought a ticket to see a subtitled film and, before the film started, they filled in the questionnaire with the answers given by the respondents.

The value of this study lies in the fact that it represents one of the earliest audience studies in our discipline and one of the first to state a clear set of working hypotheses. Four of these hypotheses were confirmed, namely: the spectators had a university education (51%); they went to the cinema regularly (65%, at least several times a month); they were satisfied with the quality of the subtitles (51%) and they would like more subtitled films to be shown in cinemas (61%). One of the two hypotheses that were rejected was related with the filmgoers' age, since only 48% were between 31 and 50 years old. The second hypothesis that turned out to be false referred to the reason why people went to see subtitled films at the cinema: many of them (57%) admitted that they went because they needed to improve their level of proficiency in a foreign language. Such a high figure was not expected for this hypothesis.

3. Methodological characteristics of the studies conducted

In this section we finish with the main methodological characteristics of the surveys that we have just outlined. These characteristics have been grouped into the following subsections: general design of the study, population and sample, and data collection tool.

3.1. Aspects related with the general design of the study

Translation Studies, today, is a new field as far as the use of surveys is concerned. It is also a new area where their findings can be applied and can thus be added to the list of previously existing fields of application, which includes marketing, the mass media and advertising, public opinion, healthcare, demography, and so forth.

Topics addressed
The studies that were conducted addressed written translation (Golden et al. 1998, Mackenzie 2000, Li 2000), interpreting (Calvo Encinas 2004, Chiaro and Nocella 2004, Lim 2005) and audiovisual translation (Widler 2004).

The topics that were investigated are subjects of great interest at the present time and are closely related to the work done by professional translators and interpreters. They include issues such as the market's need to match syllabus content, the professional training of graduates and their occupational integration; the current situation of translation services and sales value; and the concept of the quality of the different modes of translation and the way they are provided as a business service.

Aims pursued

All the surveys described here were carried out with academic and descriptive interests in mind, but some of the studies were also intended for application in educational settings (Golden et al. 1998, Mackenzie 2000, Li 2000, Lim 2005). The surveys by Calvo Encinas (2004), Widler (2004) and Lim (2005) followed a descriptive and clearly exploratory approach. Moreover, two of the surveys were intended to fulfil more specific objectives: a pragmatic objective of setting up a directory of translators and interpreters in Catalonia (Golden et al. 1998) and a methodological objective, i.e. that of validating the computer as an instrument for collecting data (Chiaro and Nocella 2004). Due to the time and cost usually involved in conducting surveys, several different purposes and types of goals are very often combined within the same project.

Methodological approach and theoretical framework

Calvo Encinas (2004) and Lim (2005) acknowledge the exploratory nature of their surveys, which are therefore not sustained by any kind of elaborate theoretical framework. The work by Chiaro and Nocella (2004), however, is very different because it sets out from a well-grounded theoretical foundation. Widler (2004) does not offer any kind of theoretical framework, but she does formulate her working hypotheses, which are tested throughout the study. Li (2000) recognises that he applies an inductive method and that his theoretical framework is therefore slowly built up as the research process advances.

As far as the degree of elaboration of the theoretical framework is concerned, the studies by Golden, Hurtado Albir and Piqué (1992) and Mackenzie (2000) have an implicit theoretical framework, as occurs in the case of business-type surveys. The theoretical framework they take as their starting point is supposedly related to the job market and to the economics of the services sector, but these concepts are not developed theoretically and no particular economic and labour trend is dealt with in any depth.

Type of triangulation

In the surveys by Golden, Hurtado Albir and Piqué (1992) and the one by Mackenzie (2000) it can be seen how the two social groups that are studied (representatives of the work demand and supply) reflect each other and give their opinion about the context of activity they share, that is, the labour market and translation and interpreting services. We have called this comparison of opinions the "mirror" effect. According to the translation typology proposed by Denzin (1970), this would be the case of a theoretical triangulation. It should be noted that the low response rate of one of the social groups under study is offset by the combination of two types of social groups (Golden et al. 1998). Generally speaking, the lowest response rate comes from employers of translators, who represent demand for labour. To mitigate the shortage of answers received from this social group, the information is collected from translators (who represent supply of labour).

The survey by Li (2000) is the only study in which a methodological-type triangulation is performed (Denzin 1970, Flick 2004) and combines the quantitative (survey) and the qualitative strategies (semi-structured interviews).

In the study by Calvo Encinas (2004), the main data acquired in the survey are completed with additional data obtained by the prior contextualisation process (analysis of secondary documental sources), without actually achieving theoretical or methodological triangulation.

Chiaro and Nocella (2004) do not apply triangulation either; instead the data are submitted to a more advanced method of statistical processing (multivariate analysis).

Geographical scope

The surveys described here have different scopes that may be local, regional and worldwide. They were conducted in a wide range of areas, countries and continents, such as Spain (Golden et al. 1992, Calvo Encinas 2004), Finland (Mackenzie 2000), Austria (Widler 2004), Hong Kong (Li 2000), South Korea (Lim 2005) or Italy, although on a worldwide scale (Chiaro and Nocella 2004).

In these studies, however, results from different geographical areas are not compared. In this respect it must be remembered that, for the case of very broad survey designs carried out over several countries or continents, steps should be taken to ensure that the study and its instrument (questionnaire) are correctly adapted to the different societies in which the fieldwork is to be carried out (Behling and Slaw 2000).

Interdisciplinary nature

Due to the costs and the number of people involved in studies that use surveys, several of the surveys discussed here were conducted as part of wider, funded projects at university, regional or European levels (Golden et al. 1992, Mackenzie 2000, Widler 2004). It is not unusual for more than one university or more than one country to take part in organising and conducting a survey.

Because they are costly, time-consuming and laborious, they need to be undertaken by teams (Chiaro and Nocella 2004), which often include experts from different disciplines, such as professional statisticians, psychologists, interviewers, editors, specialists in documentation, content analysts and graphic designers.

3.2. Aspects related with the population and the sample

Population

Four population groups were identified: students of translation and interpreting (Lim 2005); translators and interpreters (Golden et al. 1992, Mackenzie 2000, Li 2000, Chiaro and Nocella 2004); final users of interpreting (Calvo Encinas 2004, Widler 2004); and employers of translators and interpreters (Golden et al. 1992, Mackenzie 2000), bearing in mind the twofold role played by translation companies as both suppliers and users. As discussed in the previous section, the perspectives of translators and their employers were submitted to triangulation in two of the surveys (Golden et al. 1992, Mackenzie 2000).

To use the terminology proposed by López Romo (1998; Table 1), the units studied in these surveys can be broken down into users, audience, workgroups and professionals. It can be seen that the use of surveys to analyse the organisations within the world of translation (translation companies, other business enterprises, public institutions, etc.) is not very common (Hermans and Lambert 1998).

The way the populations studied in the surveys are defined and delimited reflects the conception that their authors have as regards the make-up of the labour market and of translation services (public sector and private sector; employers, translators and users; the twofold role played by translation companies).

These populations are defined in a very abstract way and thus resemble the hypothetical universes mentioned by Ander-Egg (1990: 179). Their abstract nature derives mainly from the fact that they are numerically and socially limitless populations: not even an approximate idea is given of their numerical size or of the size of the theoretical profiles that they are made up of. Therefore neither the chances of each element being included in the sample nor their representation factor are known (López Romo 1998).

The difficulty involved in defining populations in our discipline was noted by Neunzig (2002) in relation with experimental designs:

> One of the main problems here lies in determining what one understands, for example, by "experienced translators", that is, the universe that one wishes to examine, since there is no external and commonly accepted criterion that defines it. The definition of the universe (and at the same time the construction of the sample) is crucial when it comes to the

interpretation (always subjective) and the extrapolation of the data (which is only valid for the defined universe). (our translation) (Neunzig 2002: 83)

Sampling
The sampling that was applied was theoretical, exploratory and non-probabilistic. Sampling was carried out following a series of selection criteria but no probabilistic sampling technique was employed and therefore, from a statistical point of view, the samples are not representative (López Romo 1998, Table 1). As a result, it was not possible to apply an inferential statistical operation to allow the findings to be extrapolated to the whole population.[4]

Hence, the samples obtained in the surveys can be called *judgement* and not *probabilistic* samples. To use Cea D'Ancona's (2004) terminology, we could say that they are circumstantial samples because only volunteers take part in the survey (Chiaro and Nocella 2004: 285). The lack of responses from representatives with a particular theoretical profile is not complemented later with information from other representatives with the same profile.

The limitations that make it more difficult to obtain a statistically representative sample may have their roots in the lack of reliable, sound sampling frameworks available before the study begins (Golden et al. 1992). As we have observed in the surveys presented here, each study of this type has to construct its own sampling frame ad hoc (a database of all the units of the population created before the study begins), and this is one of the factors that makes the research process longer and raises the costs involved. There seem to be very few studies in our field that make use of already-existing databases, one example of which could be the *Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales* (Continuous Samples of Working Lives) made available to researchers by the *Diputació de Barcelona* (Barcelona Provincial Council) (Valero et al. 2008).

In this respect, from an economic perspective, Vande Walle notes that the absence of an official body responsible for collecting statistical data and the lack of methodological rigour in the quantitative empirical studies in our discipline make it impossible to develop a clear view of the translation market, its evolution and its tendencies. This situation also hampers any decision-making on the subject:

> First observation: there is still no official body responsible for establishing reliable statistics for our profession, from a strictly economic perspective, which allows comparisons to be made, trends to be identified, or to schedule training. [...] Of course, there are empirical studies. But modern economics cannot rely on approximations, hypotheses that have been tested to a greater or lesser extent on a more or less representative sample, on numbers that are compiled in such a way as to more or less meet the needs of the case. We only have to look at the number of studies that appear on a regular basis and in which the numbers are never used but to justify the release of the latest version of translation memory X or the appearance of software Y. All these figures, all these studies [...], taken case by case, are of no scientific interest whatsoever. (our translation) (Vande Walle 2006: 81)

In contrast to this author, we believe that the studies carried out in Translation Studies are of scientific interest, although they may be lacking in economic interest because they do not offer enough statistical reliability to allow the findings to be generalised to the whole population under study. This means that it would also be unwise to accept any economic decisions that might be taken based on them.

One possible solution to this problem would be to foster the creation and updating of these databases on the subjects and institutions involved in Translation Studies. One of the great challenges facing Translation Studies today in the field of empirical research is how to encourage researchers to study and evaluate the existing sampling frames in order to be able to decide whether there is a need to work on a new framework or not. Another solution would be to state the definition of the population more clearly (and not work with hypothetical universes;

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4. Orozco (2002: 73-77) points out in this respect that, even in the field of experimental research into written translation, methodologically ungrounded generalisations are sometimes made because they are based on non-representative samples.

Ander-Egg 1990) and thus increase the chances of obtaining a sample that is valid from the statistical point of view. Finally, it would be useful to create theoretical profiles that are adapted to fit the population, including an approximate idea of their numerical representativeness.

3.3. Aspects related with the data collection instrument

Process of creation
All the questionnaires that were used were the result of a painstaking process of creation consisting in several stages: qualitative exploratory phase, preliminary version of the instrument, testing, modifications and final version. This process becomes all the more significant if we bear in mind that all questionnaires are a specific form of communication, by means of a dialogue (question, answer), in which one of the two interlocutors is not present (i.e. the one who poses the questions). Therefore it is not possible to ensure that the respondent understands all the terms and how to interpret the questions that he or she must answer (Low 1999).

Questionnaire structure and format
It should be pointed out, first of all, that a description of the instruments used is not always published. The surveys that we were able to consult contained closed questions (multiple choice and with Likert scales: "a little", "quite a lot", "a lot", etc.) and also open ones, which makes the task of structuring the data more complicated. The instruments applied were of both the traditional pencil-and-paper type and electronic (Chiaro and Nocella 2004), and they could be either self-administered or administered by the interviewer (Calvo Encinas 2004, Widler 2004). The questionnaires used in the same study were adapted to fit different populations, in accordance with the specific characteristics of each social group. Some questionnaires were used in combination with other techniques that provided qualitative data (semi-structured interviews, Li 2000; analyses of documentary sources, Calvo Encinas 2000). It appears to be quite common for the first block of questions to ask for social and occupational data about the informants. And this explains why surveys are so interesting as a method of identifying and describing social groups.

Data analysis
The data collected with the questionnaires were analysed with the mathematical tools made available by descriptive statistics. The most frequently used summary measures were frequencies expressed as percentages. On this score, we go along with the proposal, put forward by Chiaro and Nocella (2004), to make greater use of descriptive measures such as the range, the mode and the median in the area of Translation Studies.

Conclusions

As can be seen from the seven studies we have analysed, in recent decades Translation Studies has incorporated survey-based studies. After analysing the seven studies, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Simple research designs
A wide range of features are involved in the general design of the study; nevertheless, all of them share a simple research design, whose methodological characteristics are:
- An exploratory and descriptive methodological approach (with few explanatory and causal approaches).
- They tend to be rather more qualitative, and their potential as a quantitative method is not exploited. This phenomenon may be due to the difficulties involved in obtaining a probabilistic sample in our field.
- Combining (or triangulation of) surveys with qualitative techniques (observation, interviews, discussion groups) is not usually very common.

- They are conducted in a unitary fashion in time (cross-sectional rather than longitudinal designs).

2. Study of socio-professional groups and non-probabilistic samples

These studies collect the opinions, values, knowledge, habits and needs of the different socio-professional groups involved in translation and interpreting. The contribution made by surveys to social research in Translation Studies is also reflected by the fact that using them makes it necessary to define, delimit and relate the different social groups involved in the practice of translation and interpreting. Becoming aware of the way these social groups are structured in society at the same time helps them to become more consolidated.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, given the difficulty involved in obtaining statistically representative samples in the area of translation and interpreting, the numerical results cannot be inferred to the social group that the sample represents. As a result, it would be risky to use them as the basis for any kind of decision-making. Studies using surveys are mainly conducted in Translation Studies for strategic (exploratory) purposes, since they collect information in a wide, general manner with a view to using the results to design and plan activities (e.g. university courses). They cannot, however, be taken as conclusive for commercial projects.

3. Qualitative, well-built instruments

The exploratory approach of the studies is also reflected in the qualitative nature of the instruments that are used, since they contain a large number of open questions. On the other hand, it should be noted that they were developed following a painstaking process of construction.

As we pointed out earlier, some of these instruments have not been published. At this point we would like to stress the importance of publishing the instruments used for data collection and thus making them available to the whole scientific community, as some studies have done (Calvo Encinas 2004, Widler 2004, Lim 2005, PACTE 2005, 2008). Nevertheless, unfortunately, such cases are scarce.

We would like to end by underlining the fact that survey-based studies in Translation Studies allow contact to be made between the academic and professional worlds, since they are both interested in the current state of the professional practice of translation in its many different shapes and forms. As a result, in addition to incorporating a new research method, our discipline also expands its object of study to focus on the socio-professional groups involved.

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