Research Trends in Theses of Doctoral Candidates of Translation Studies in Iran: An Overview Study[1]

_____ Reza Koohestanian[2]

Abstract

The present study investigated the orientations of Iranian doctoral candidates of Translation Studies between 2011 and 2024 based on the keywords used within their thesis titles. A data bank of one hundred and eight theses from three universities was established. Then, using Customer Magnetism software, the most frequent words, and their lemma were extracted from 700 keywords used in thesis titles and converted into a more compact list of keywords through human processing. Moreover, in some cases, the researcher investigated the entire title or even studied the abstract for more assurance. The findings indicated ten main keyword categories with the highest frequency. The results showed that most doctoral dissertation titles of the translation studies in Iran based on the branches and sub-branches in Holmes' map of translation studies (1988) are product-oriented DTS, function-oriented DTS, and translator-training-oriented applied TS. The results also revealed that four remain untouched in Iran out of twelve key areas in Translation Studies presented by Williams and Chesterman (2002). Further scholars are advised to investigate why thesis topics in other areas have been neglected. This study is expected to improve the progress of TS research in Iran.

Key Words: Doctoral theses, Keyword extraction, Translation studies trends

1. Introduction

Comprehensive development in any society depends significantly on the quantitative and qualitative development of research activities of that society. One of

the basic factors of progress in developed countries is special attention to research. The principles of any kind of progress and development are directly related to scientific research, and the development of advanced countries is the result of investment in the research sector. The large volume of scientific research in developed industrial countries is indicative of this fact.

Universities are the main institutions in the research and development of countries because they have the three pillars of research management, researchers and research tools (Salimi et al., 2017). Through activities such as determining research topics needed by society, determining research priorities, accepting and implementing research needed by society and organizations, training students with research skills, organizing and monitoring research activities, classifying and making research results usable, etc. universities have a prominent role in scientific research and development (Singh et al., 2021).

Translation studies (TS) have been developing rapidly during recent decades. Some key developments in the field are (a) the emergence of translation studies as a discipline, (b) the emergence of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), (c) the shift from a linguistic to a cultural approach, (d) increased interest in literary translation, (e) technological advances, and (f) globalization, and translation needs (Pratiwi, 2023). As Mona Baker (2009) points out translation studies is a relatively new discipline that has developed phenomenally since the 1970s and 1980s. The number of specialist journals, establishing centers for translation studies, and founding a new series devoted to translation are growing.

Holmes identified translation as a research discipline in 1972. He made a considerable contribution to the development of translation studies as a university discipline and was recognized as a pioneer for his work in this field (Pratiwi, 2023). This advancement prompted a noteworthy request for academic publications from

commercial and university publishing houses: journals, book series, conference proceedings, textbooks, encyclopedias, and dictionaries (Laviosa et al., 2021).

Although the early history of translation studies can be traced back to ancient times (Ghanooni, 2012), it has not been more than a few years since this field was launched at some world universities. After establishing his course at the master's level in Iran's universities, "translation studies" at the doctorate level was first established at Allameh Tabatabai University in 2011. After that, it was taught at Isfahan University in 2012 and Ferdowsi University in 2013. The program usually spans over 4 years, including three semesters of coursework and a thesis project. Some of the courses of this program include critical analysis of modern translation theories, pragmatics and discourse analysis in translation studies, didactics of translation, culture and translation, terminology and lexicography, translation criticism, the poetics of translation, and computers and translation. Admission of students to both M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Translation Studies, as in all other majors, takes place through an annual nationwide admission examination (Kafi et al., 2018).

Numerous Ph.D. candidates engage in thesis research annually. Consequently, this study aims to investigate trends in thesis writing among Iranian doctoral candidates in Translation Studies. Through a frequency analysis comparing research from the inception of doctoral programs to 2024, the researcher seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Which subjects have Ph.D. candidates of Translation Studies worked the most?

2. Which areas of translation studies remain largely unexplored by Iranian Ph.D. candidates in research?

The researcher aims to know what areas remained more or less untouched in translation studies by Iranian Ph.D. candidates. Thus, future research can

compensate for this deficiency. Knowing doctoral dissertation topics can also open a window of knowledge for the researcher. Subsequently, this research can lead researchers to other studies to discover the reasons for focusing more on some areas of translation or less work on some other subjects by Iranian Ph.D. candidates.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Holmes' (1988) map of Translation Studies

Holmes' (1988) map of Translation Studies consists of the first classifications made in the realm of Translation Studies. Munday et al. (2022) believes that even after all these years (the original work was presented in 1972, but not widely published until 1988), the map is still a guideline to the researchers and scholars in dividing the main branches and sub-branches of TS systematically.
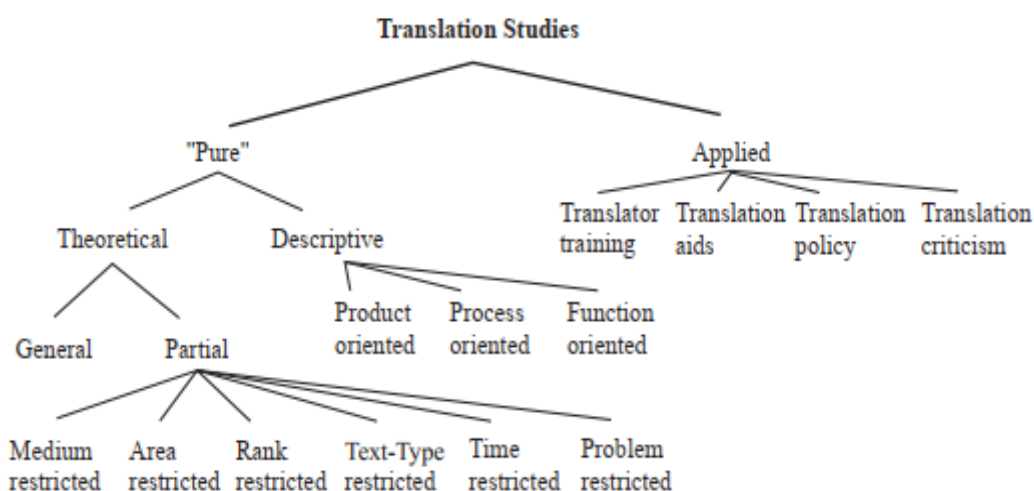

Figure 1. Holmes' "Map" of Translation Studies. This Figure Illustrates the Main Classifications in Translation Studies (from Toury, 1995, p.10).

2.2. Williams and Chesterman's (2002) Map of TS

Williams and Chesterman (2002) propose 12 research areas concerning Holmes' map.

The first area is **text analysis and translation** which involves source text analysis, comparison of translations and their source texts, comparison of

translations and non-translated texts, and translation with commentary (annotated translation) (2002, 6–8).

The second one **is translation quality assessment** which has three approaches: source-language oriented focusing on equivalence; target-language oriented focusing on translation's degree of naturalness; and the evaluation of translation effects on clients, teachers, critics, and readers (applying functional or communicative theories) (2002, 8–9).

The third is **genre translation** which investigates different types of texts to be translated (2002, 9–13).

The fourth is **multimedia translation**, which involves audiovisual texts, revoicing, and sur- or subtitles (2002, 13–14).

The fifth is **translation and technology** which involves evaluating software, software localization, effects of technology, website translation, and the place of technology in translator training (2002, 14–16).

The sixth is **translation history** which focuses on the translators themselves, their backgrounds, their relation with publishers and editors, and their motivation and their translation practice (who); on which texts are translated or not translated in particular culture and times (what); on the reasons why certain texts are translated or not translated (why); and on translators' strategies through the ages (how) (2002, 16–18).

The seventh is **translation ethics** which researches on different kinds of ethics, cultural and ideological factors, codes of practice, and personal vs. professional ethics (2002, 18–20).

The eighth is terminology and glossaries whose research can be both theoretical and practical and which involve documentary searches and corpus work (2002, 20–21).

The ninth is **interpreting** whose research has developed from anecdotal reports to systematic work drawing on many aspects of interpreting, such as linguistics, communication, cognition, and socio-cultural aspects (2002, 21–23). Interpreting research also focuses on the mode of interpreting (simultaneous or consecutive) (2002, 21–23).

The tenth is the **translation process** focusing on workplace studies and protocol studies.

The eleventh is translator training that includes curriculum design, typical problem areas, implementation, and professional dimensions (2002, 23–25).

The twelfth is **the translation profession** whose research can be historical or contemporary and which focuses on the situation of the professional association (2002, 25–27).

2.3. Previous Studies

The research has some similarities with other studies done by scholars. In a case study, Nouraey and Karimnia (2013) investigated the orientations of Iranian M.A. students of Translation Studies between 2002 and 2012 based on the keywords used within their thesis abstracts. A data bank of four hundred abstracts from six universities out of eleven was established. The results indicated twelve main keyword categories with the highest frequency among the others. The results also pointed out that out of twelve key areas in Translation Studies presented by Williams and Chesterman (2002), six remain untouched in Iran. These included "translation and technology", "translation history", "translation ethics", "interpreting", "translator training" and "translation profession".

In another study, Nouraey and Karimnia (2015) stated that Translation Studies research methods and trends have often been untouched in the modern society of Iran. The results revealed that a notable number of translation professors, students, and researchers in Iran do research programs on various aspects of this developing discipline. Moreover,

they found that students are largely encountered with problems in terms of choosing a suitable topic. They believed that maybe researchers are informed enough of the gaps between the main branches and sub-branches of Translation Studies in Iran.

Sanatifar (2019) investigated translator studies in Iran based on Chesterman's 'agent model'. Consequently, articles of the Iranian researchers published in two local journals were investigated based on title, keywords, and abstract. The findings revealed that translator studies, with sociological themes, are an under-researched area in need of more attention. Finally, the researcher argued the causes behind such a gap in Iran and proposed a set of suggestions as to how we could fill up the gap.

Moreover, the researcher intends to conduct a general review of the background of translation studies in Europe and some countries that deal with the discipline academically.

Lan et al. (2009) focused on research trends and methods of translation studies in Taiwan between 2002 and 2008. Their results revealed that a great number of theses in Taiwan are "translation with commentary". Moreover, they found that the 12 research areas listed in the map, "multimedia translation", "translation history", "translation ethics", "translation and technology", and "translation profession" are untouched.

Moreover, Pym (2014) did another study entitled "Translation studies in Europe—reasons for it, and problems to work on". He pointed out that future tasks for Translation Studies in Europe should involve: 1) attention to far more than the large languages in the area; 2) developed exchange with neighboring disciplines, especially with scholars working on language acquisition, 3) an acceptance that translated communication should concern involvement and interaction, in addition to public information, 4) questioning of the Western translation form as the model best

suited to interactive cross-lingual governance, and 5) experimentation with technologies that stimulate citizen involvement.

Another research was conducted by Mellinger and Hanson (2016) focusing on quantitative research methods in translation and interpreting studies. Results showed that many studies in translation studies have applied qualitative research methods much more than quantitative ones, especially in Indonesia.

Beddari (2021) underscored the fundamental concepts and approaches to the translation that have come to the fore at different points in Western culture, beginning from the work of Roman commentators (especially Cicero and Horace) through the second half of the twentieth century when translation studies introduced itself as a new discipline. He believed that translation studies, establishing itself as a standalone discipline of scholarly study, has been gradually developed and connected with different disciplines and presents a new perspective to translation theory.

A study by Ahmad et al. (2019) found slower output and a mediocre number of publications, reasonable funding for research, no quantified knowledge translation between universities and industry, and a research culture in formative years. Finally, more determination is required to translate research into practice for humanities and social science research in Malaysia.

3. Research Method

Three universities are offering Ph.D. programs in Translation Studies in Iran. These include Allameh Tabataba'i University, Ferdowsi University, and Isfahan University. As conducting a research program is a required course for all doctoral students of Translation Studies in Iran, the researchers could benefit from the high frequency of words used in thesis titles to delve into different aspects of Translation Studies trends.

This research applied a descriptive mixed method (qualitative and quantitative), as it describes the trends of Iranian students' thesis topics from the year of establishing a Doctoral degree in Translation Studies in Iran to 2024 from three universities in Iran. The present study analyzes the titles' keywords of one hundred and eight theses to discover which topics have been worked on more by Iranian Ph.D. candidates and which areas of translation studies remain largely unexplored. There are three state universities (Allameh, Ferdowsi, and Isfahan). The data is obtained from an online site (Irandoc.ac.ir). The data are from the year of establishing a doctoral degree in Translation Studies in Iran to 2024 from three universities in Iran.

Table 1 contains the universities' names, locations, and status.

Table 1. Status and location of the universities

Universities	Location	Status
Allameh Tabataba'i University	Tehran	State
Ferdowsi	Mashhad	State
Isfahan	Isfahan	State

3.1. Keyword Extraction

The data were obtained by several ways. First of all, the researcher extracted almost all the titles or the topics of the doctoral theses from the year of establishing the Translation Studies Ph.D. program to 2024 in Iran. Number of 700 keywords were extracted from one hundred and eight Ph.D. thesis topics in Translation Studies. On average, theses contained 4 to 7 keywords. The main rule in choosing keywords was based on the role they play in thesis topics. Based on his knowledge, the researcher recognized the role and importance of keywords. The keywords were then typed in a Word document file format (Appendix 1 provides some examples of the keywords extracted from topics) and analyzed through the keyword extractor software presented by Customer Magnetism. The software then presented the most frequently used keywords in topics along with their lemma. As an example, a

keyword like "translat" includes "translate", "translation", "translating", "translational" and "translator" as its lemma (as cited in Lan et al., 2009).

Keywords in Ph.D. dissertation titles align with specific areas on Holmes' map. There were criteria used to determine which words or lemmas correspond to each area. For instance, the keyword "Translator Training" in the title "training of translators and examining the views of professional translators" indicates this title aligns with the applied area on Holmes' map. In addition to, the researcher, in some cases, investigated the entire title or even studied the abstract for more assurance.

Moreover, by some criteria, the researcher recognized how keywords or lemmas focus on specific areas within Williams and Chesterman's framework. For example, the word "Audiovisual" in the title "audiovisual translation as renarration" indicates that this title belongs to the Multimedia Translation area of Williams and Chesterman's (2002) framework. However, the researcher was not satisfied with this rule for correct recognition; for more certainty, he sometimes examined the entire title and read the abstracts.

3.2. Human Processing

As the keyword extractor software does not take the lemma into account, human processing is inserted to reach the most frequently used keywords in thesis titles.

Table 2 shows the data collection procedures in a detailed way.

Table 2. Demographic Table of the Data Collection Procedures

Name of University	Number of Theses Studied
Allameh Tabataba'i University	65
Ferdowsi University	25

Isfahan University	18
Total	108

The main keywords extracted are presented in Table 3 some of which follow the pattern of "X*", in which X is the root to which a lemma has adhered:

Table 3. The Most Frequent Keywords Extracted from the TS Ph.D. Thesis titles

Keyword	Some Lemma	Frequency of the Key word Along With Its Lemma
Translat*	Translation, translating, translational, translator.	95
Iran*	Iran, Iranian.	18
Anal*	Analysis, Analytic, analyzing	16
Litera*	Literature, literary.	13
Soci*	Social, socio	11
Discours*	Discourse	12
Theor*	Theory, Theories	11
Model*	Model	10
Interpr*	Interpreting, interpretation, Interpreter	9
Lingu*	Linguistic, language	9
Cult*	Culture, cultural.	8
Audi *	Audiovisual, audience	8
Train*	Training, trainer	7
Subt*	Subtitle, subtitling	6
Revolut*	Revolution of Iran, Islamic revolution, before revolution, after revolution	7
Persian*	Persian	5
Pahlavi*	Pahlavi	4

| Quran* | Quran, Quranic | 4 |
| Change* | Change, Changes | 4 |

With an insight from Table 3, it is important to note that some keywords used repeatedly could be categorized under a main classification. For instance, the "Subt*" keyword could go under the "Audio*". The seventeen main keywords were then put under nine main categories. Table 4 provides a more compact classification of these keywords:

Table 4. The Overlapping Keywords Presented in Table 3.

Keyword	Possible Sub-Branches
Translat*	
Persian*	Iran, Iranian, Revolution, Phalavi
Theor*	Model*, Change*
Audi*	Subt*
Discours*	Lingu* Cult* Soci*
Interpr*	
Anal*	
Train*	
Litera*	
Quran*	

5. Conclusion and Implications and Suggestion

The results of the present study could be discussed through different classifications in Translation Studies. The researcher chose Holmes' map of Translation Studies (1988), which was later developed by Toury (1995), and Williams and Chesterman's (2002) fundamental issues in Translation Studies. Although this study identified which areas TS doctoral candidates have researched the most and on which the least, an important aspect of the study has not yet been

worked on. Therefore, the author suggests that other researchers should enhance their knowledge of TS and investigate the reason for choosing the areas of the translation studies doctoral thesis or why some areas are still untouched.

Moreover, due to the increasing development of technology in all disciplines in the world, and since very few topics belong to "translation and technology" in Translation Studies theses by Iranian doctoral candidates, this leads to the conclusion that translation studies research in Iran has not yet developed well. Thus, further scholars are advised to investigate why thesis topics on translation and technology have been neglected. In the end, it is expected that this study can improve the progress of TS research in Iran.

5.1. Comparing the Results to the Holmes/Toury (1995) Map of Translation Studies

Comparing the frequent keywords obtained from the results of the present study to the branches and sub-branches in Holmes' (1988) map, it would be interesting to point out that the results show a high correspondence with one another. The results of the present study show the overuse of DTS in research. As an example, "Iran", "Analyzing", "Literary", "Social", "Discourse", "Theory" and "Model" are the most frequently used words found in the Ph.D. dissertation titles of the translation studies in Iran to one of the following branches:

1)   Product-oriented DTS, which examines existing translations by comparing it with its source text;
2)   Function-oriented DTS which is concerned with the influences of a translated text exerted.
3)   Translator training oriented applied TS.

This result is somewhat similar to the findings of Nouraey and Karimnia (2013), who discovered that Master's degree theses in Iranian universities focused on Product-oriented DTS, Function-oriented DTS, and Process-oriented DTS respectively. The only difference in the results of these two studies is that Nouraey and Karimnia (2013) showed that most of the researches of master's students are

process-oriented, but according to the results of this study, most of the researches of doctoral candidates were in the field of translator training.

5.2. Comparing the Results to Williams and Chesterman's (2002) Model

From the findings, it can be concluded that four remain untouched in Iran out of twelve key areas in Translation Studies presented by Williams and Chesterman (2002). These included "translation and technology", "Terminology and Glossaries", "translation profession" and "Translation Ethics" all areas to work on in the future. The results also pointed out that most of the TS research topics conducted in Iranian universities from establishing the TS Ph.D. program to 2024 belong to the text analysis and translation area of Williams and Chestermans (2002) for doctoral theses.

This research has similarities with some previous studies. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Nouraey and Karimnia (2013) in Iran on Translation Studies M.A. students' research and Lan et al. (2009) in Taiwan. The results of all three pointed out that some areas in Translation Studies presented by Williams and Chesterman (2002) remain untouched. Three areas are common in all three research: "translation and technology", "translation ethics", and "translation profession". Moreover, Pym had mentioned earlier (2014) that more use of technology in translation studies in the future is important. This statement shows that less has been studied in this field.

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Appendix 1. *Sample of Keywords Extracted from the Theses Topics Between*

from the year of establishing the TS Ph.D. program to 2024 *in Iran*

Theses	Topics Keywords				
Thesis 1	Qualitative Study	Translation Trainer	Competent	Curriculum	
Thesis 2	Mulla Sadra	Theory	Translation Studies	Application	Motion
Thesis 3	Manipulation	Translation	Literature	Context	Iran
Thesis 4	Quality of Translation	Clients' Perspective	Service	Iran	
Thesis 5	Mapping	Psyche	Translator	Language	
Thesis 6	Audiovisual	Translation	Renarration		
Thesis 7	Strategies	Translating	Islamic	Qur'an	English
Thesis 8	Women	Discourse	Translation	Iran	
Thesis 9	Politics	Translation	Qajar era	institutions	
Thesis 10	translation	Existentialist	Discourse	Iran	
Thesis 11	Subtitling	Deaf	Comprehension	Iranian	
Thesis 12	Translations	Khayyam	Poetics	Models of Cognitive	Aesthetics