



Communication Studies Without Frontiers? Translation and Cosmopolitanism Across Academic Cultures

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This article discusses the translatability of communication scholarship in the context of globalized academia and research traditions. The notion of translation is useful to reflect upon the globalization of academic cultures in communication studies. The globalization of academic cultures confronts matters that translation studies have long recognized: the clash between dogmatism and difference, language slips and gaps, and the possibility of (mis)understandings. Although globalization invites scholars to broaden perspectives, it does not necessarily promote the rapprochement of epistemic communities in communication studies or the values of universal, de-Westernized, and cosmopolitan scholarship. We may hope communication research includes a plurality of global voices, but we still lack a clear path to overcome different understandings about quality standards, conceptual languages, and epistemological premises.

Keywords: translation, communication studies, globalization, academic culture

Between Fragmentation and Globalization

The field of communication studies is pulled in different directions—with constant fragmentation of research interests and increased connectivity among scholars around the world. Fragmentation intensifies centrifugal tendencies that drive inward-looking scholarship and deepen divides in communication research. Globalization, instead, sets conditions for bringing closer traditions of communication scholarship and expanding intellectual horizons beyond geographical and academic divisions.

Located at the crossroads of the humanities and the social sciences, the field developed as the result of the layering of disciplinary traditions and lines of inquiry concerned with issues broadly identified as “communication” in the United States (Cobley & Schultz, 2013; Craig & Muller, 2007; Park & Pooley,

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2008). The field evolved as the meeting point for myriad disciplines with different theoretical foundations and methodological approaches. Given this genealogy, the field developed without a common theoretical or conceptual core. It has been a decentered field, stringing together strands of scholarship with dissimilar intellectual provenance. Consequently, the field consolidated as the result of the aggregation of academic interests in communication broadly defined—interpersonal, organizational, mediated, media industries, cultural studies, information studies, language, rhetoric, intercultural, journalism, and media and information policies, among others. Different approaches to communication gradually consolidated in areas of specialization isolated from one another. This situation has raised concerns on the grounds that academic fields need well-defined, common theoretical questions and concepts as well as shared lines of research (Eadie, 2011; Nordenstreng, 2011), and it has motivated efforts to find cross-cutting theoretical, analytical, and methodological commonalities (Craig, 2007; Stanfill, 2012).

Fragmentation continues apace, adding more lines of research under the golf-size umbrella of communication studies. The “mediation of everything” (Livingstone, 2009) in contemporary societies has spawned new empirical questions related to communication. The ubiquity of digital information and communication technologies in everyday life is the subject of attention from distant corners of academia. Communication research is hardly contained by the conventional frontiers of the field as various disciplines are interested in communication issues. Today, one finds research about communication in information science and philosophy, rhetoric and sociology, public policy and political science, psychology and anthropology, as well as numerous interdisciplinary fields. Therefore, calls to find common theoretical and conceptual ground confront a challenging situation—an ever-expanding, shifting field of research.

Simultaneously, the field of communication has become increasingly globalized in recent decades. Here globalization is understood as a process by which scholars and academic programs around the world become increasingly interconnected. The consolidation of international institutional networks of professional associations, conferences, research projects, journals, and books links communication scholarship across geographical borders.

The notion of academic globalization has a positive ring. As Sonia Livingstone observes (2007), “If internationalisation means exchanging knowledge and understanding across borders, then we would probably all sign up to it, confident that national approaches or concerns could find their place within this larger forum” (p. 274).

Globalization conjures ideals dear to the current academic imagination (Brennan, 1997; Cheah & Robbins, 1998; Stevenson, 2012). It represents an invitation to join common spaces for the exchange of ideas beyond geographical boundaries. It is associated with de-Westernization and cosmopolitanism, an intellectual shift to abandon provincialism and embrace multiperspective analysis unshackled by the limitations of geography, place, or identity (Waisbord, 2015). It dislocates geo-academic centrism by opening up perspectives beyond various forms of provincialism (e.g., geographical, theoretical, conceptual). It conveys the cultivation of an open intellectual mind. It dovetails with lofty educational ideals of shaping global citizens who are cognizant and open to the world beyond their immediate surroundings. It promises a way of formulating arguments unrestrained by national borders. It crystallizes a brand of academic multiculturalism that both recognizes and capitalizes on geocultural differences to

expand intellectual horizons and enrich knowledge. In summary, academic globalization carries the promise of “knowledge without frontiers.”

A more pessimistic position views academic globalization as the handmaiden of the global imposition of Western academic cultures. Observers have warned of the dissolution of differences across “national” scholarships under the influence of norms and epistemologies associated with mainstream U.S. research. Globalization is viewed as the consolidation of multiple-tiered global academia featuring the supremacy of U.S. institutions and academic cultures and scholarly cultures from other regions in a subsidiary role (Heilbron, 2014). Within this line of argument about a hierarchical globalized academia, others believe that, rather than the supremacy of American academia, it signals the hegemony of theories, methodologies, and styles of thinking and writing identified with particular academic cultures of the North Atlantic.

Here “academic cultures” are understood as prevalent ways in which excellence is commonly defined and understood in scholarly work—ways of thinking, argumentation styles, writing, public presentation (Becher & Trowler, 2001). In Ringer’s (1992) definition, academic culture is “the network of interrelated and explicit beliefs about the academic practices of teaching, learning, and research, and about the social significance of these practices” (p. 13).

What actually happens in the global encounters among academic cultures, however, is more complex than what either position expects and concludes. Hopes for de-Westernization, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism do not necessarily crystallize in unified values embraced by all. Wonderful wishes do not directly translate into actual norms and practices. It is akin to hoping for world peace and mutual understanding without considering humanity’s disgraceful historical record. Nor is it obvious that globalization necessarily crystallizes in the global domination of U.S. or Western European academic cultures and the displacement of intellectual styles indigenous to the global South.

In the case of communication studies, globalization accelerates the encountering of academic cultures, but impact on scholarly standards and perspectives cannot be determined *ex ante*. It might shape common definitions and expectations or, instead, deepen the Babelian condition of the field. It might cultivate cosmopolitan virtues or reaffirm local cultures. Just because scholars are globally networked, it does not follow that they share the same academic culture. Global connectivity neither leads to academic cosmopolitanism nor homogenized scholarship with strong Western accents.

These questions need to be approached from a sociology of academic knowledge interested in understanding the historical weight of intellectual traditions and institutional conditions underpinning scholarship. The dynamics of globalization are only intelligible within the concrete conditions of knowledge production—namely, the institutional architecture and intellectual legacies that shape academic cultures.

The Meanings of Translations

My interest in this article is to discuss the translatability of communication scholarship in the context of globalized academia and research traditions with different historical trajectories and cultures.

The notion of translation is useful to reflect upon the globalization of academic cultures in communication studies. Translation is a “trans-cultural event” (Snell-Hornby, 1995) that deals with dynamics and challenges that are intrinsic to the crossing of scholarly cultures. The globalization of academic cultures confronts matters that translation studies have long recognized: the clash between dogmatism and difference, language slips and gaps, and the possibility of (mis)understandings.

Here it is important to clarify a basic point. The issue of translation in the globalization of academic cultures is frequently identified with the domination of English as the lingua franca. English’s linguistic hegemony is viewed as inevitable (Ammon & McConnell, 2002; Harris 2011; Hyland, 2009; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Ljosland, 2007). Pressure on scholars to publish in English has been growing in Europe and other regions.

The consequences of this process are mixed. Just as a common language eases scholarly communication across borders, it also presents challenges. English’s global dominance gives advantages to scholars who are comfortable in oral and written English and/or trained in English-language universities. Therefore, if language is a site of struggle for meaning and power, the predominance of English favors specific scholars and academic communities in the permanent battle for understanding, persuasion, and visibility. It elevates English-language journals, particularly those with higher usage and citation index, to a prominent global position. It narrows participation by marginalizing scholars who do not master English. This is not just a matter affecting the access of individual scholars; it also minimizes the global presence of thematic subjects and areas of the world with small numbers of English-speaking academics.

Also, the domination of English raises concerns about the epistemological consequences for the production of knowledge. Such concerns are premised on Whorf’s (1956) classic argument about the particularities of languages grounding interpretations and conceptualizations of the world. One does not need to embrace Heidegger’s petulant conviction that true philosophical thinking is only possible in German (and ancient Greek) to recognize that intellectual work is inseparable from specific linguistic biases. Concerns about an English-dominated global academia are rooted in the notion that the biases of any language shape academic discourse. Bennett (2014) observes that the domination of English erodes traditional academic scholarship and discourses translated for an English readership. Original writing embedded in particular epistemologies and languages are adapted to the rhetorical patterns of English (Castelló & Donahue, 2012; Garcia-Ramon, 2003; Helms, Lossau, & Oslender, 2005). All languages present specific semantic boundaries that underpin forms of knowledge. The hope of perfect, univocal translations inevitably confronts the knowledge biases of languages. Therefore, publishing in English is not simply partaking in a globalized community of scholars; it also entails joining a linguistic community with specific biases grounded in linguistic and sociogeographical issues (Chovanec, 2012). No doubt, the consolidation of English as the lingua franca of the globalized academia determines unequal conditions of access and lays the ground for certain, language-embedded forms of thinking about the world.

Translation, however, entails issues beyond strictly linguistic matters. To use Paul Ricoeur’s (2006) distinction, translation involves *linguistic translations* (between languages) and *ontological translations* (between humans). Here I am interested in translation in the second interpretation,

specifically applied to translation across academic cultures in communication studies. My concern is not with semantics and the biases of languages, although this is, unquestionably, an important issue. Instead, my interest is in the translatability of differences across intellectual traditions and the institutional logics of academe. The globalization of communication studies implies not only the accommodation and adaptation of linguistic communities to the expressions and rhetoric of English-speaking academics. It also foregrounds the possibility of resonance and harmonization of intellectual work across geographic and academic cultures.

Translation, as Walter Benjamin reminded us, involves contact between languages and cultures. Because any form of knowledge is socially situated (Haraway, 1988), it is necessary to understand how translation works across academic communities that hold varying understandings of scholarly excellence. What is interesting is whether and how translation happens in ways that facilitate or impede understanding and agreement. Translation implies a process by which differences are not resolved or harmonized but, rather, are overcome around common agreement about meaning. As Ricoeur writes, translation entails “the search for optimum commensurability between the distinctive resources of the receiving language and those of the original language” (2006, p. 4). From this perspective, we should not only approach globalization in terms of connecting scholars across geographical settings but consider questions about the translatability of differences, expectations, and standards across academic cultures.

I propose to discuss the globalization of communication studies by examining questions about translation. How does translation work across academic cultures? On whose cultural terms does globalization happen? Are we moving from polyphonic discourse to streamlined speech in the field of communication? Does globalization foster the dominance of specific epistemologies defined by geocultural origin (the West) and academic cultures? Can we legitimately talk about academic Western culture in the singular considering the long-standing presence of academic tribes characterized by different epistemologies, theories, and methodologies (Becher & Trowler, 2001)? Does globalization propel the hybridization or juxtaposition of academic traditions? Or does academic imperialism ride roughshod over scholarly diversity?

My argument is as follows: Although globalization invites scholars to broaden perspectives, it does not necessarily promote the rapprochement of epistemic communities in communication studies or the values of universal, de-Westernized, and cosmopolitan scholarship. Scholars may be more attentive to research and findings produced in other countries and regions. This opening, however, does not necessarily entail a fundamental shift in the ontologies of their work—the understanding of communication, the conception of the research subject, the definition of research problems, and theoretical and methodological sympathies. Globalization prompts dialogue and collaboration among specific cultures of communication scholarship, yet it might have negligible impact on interaction among different epistemic communities. Globalization does not necessarily push scholars to engage in the politics of translation across academic languages.

The National Roots of Academic Cultures

The sociology of academic knowledge has demonstrated that scholarly work is moored in specific institutionalized contexts of production. From Karl Mannheim (1936) to Pierre Bourdieu (1984), this line of research has shown how social positions and institutional logics shape knowledge and ideas. Scholars are not free-floating producers of knowledge; they are members of specific academic tribes with their own rules and cultures. Despite long-standing claims and aspirations for scientific work unencumbered by social forces (society, politics, culture, or economics), context and social institutions do matter. Academic knowledge is inseparable from society, organizations, and group cultures and dynamics. Academic fields, to use Bourdieu's terminology (1966; Bourdieu, Passeron, & Chamboredon, 1991), feature values, symbolic capital, hierarchies, and institutions.

The social rootlessness of academic work has been extensively studied. In her groundbreaking work, Knorr-Cetina (1999) called attention to the presence and power of "epistemic cultures" with specific criteria and expectations about the production of knowledge and the definition of quality standards. Epistemic cultures are defined by shared affinities and a general consensus about methods of inquiry, theoretical canons, research practices, ontological premises, and writing styles. These factors define disciplines and fields as communities of academic knowledge and result in culturally specific academic discourses.

In her book *How Professors Think*, Michele Lamont (2009) offers further insights into the organization and performance of academic cultures. From a Bourdieusian perspective, Lamont is interested in understanding the formation and maintenance of fields of knowledge. She discusses rules that regulate behavior about acceptable practices as well as collective imaginaries about desirable norms and practices. Rules are not determined once and forever; rather, they are permanently re-created by members. Just as other professions and occupations establish and maintain "social worlds" (Becker, 1982) through regular interactions and social norms, scholars similarly renew and transmit principles of interaction and organizational norms. Academic norms are cultivated through educational programs and reinforced by customary practices such as conference presentations, publications, and funding proposals. Norms and practice are used to define legitimate boundaries of excellence and set disciplines and fields apart from one another. They provide the criteria for carving out fields of knowledge, claiming particular status vis-à-vis others, and validating standards.

Within this line of inquiry, studies have called attention to the national character of disciplines and theories. The main conclusion is that there are no universal disciplines and sciences. Academic knowledge is not bounded by disciplinary assumptions and rules constantly performed by scholars. Instead, academic cultures are potted in uniquely historical national traditions. This is reflected in conventional references to, among others, American and Austrian economics, French and German sociology, and British and American anthropology.

Adding a national or regional label to disciplines and theories is an old matter of contention in the humanities and social sciences. For every Schumpeterian argument about the desirability of science detached from locality and culture, alternative positions have suggested that knowledge is unavoidably

national. The latter argument has two versions. One calls attention to the national allegiances of intellectuals who position their work in terms of specific national visions and politics. Emile Durkheim's dream of sociology as a French science for the Third Republic is an example of this tradition. This conception views academic knowledge as impregnated by national sentiments and/or mobilized in the service of national goals. A different version sees the nationalism of academic knowledge differently—as inevitably embedded in local conditions—from the insertion of academics in public life to the conception of the mission of universities, from dominant intellectual traditions to the ideal models of scholars. Knowledge is not suspended nowhere, but it is grounded in a combination of institutional, national factors.

Explaining the national character of disciplines and theories has attracted a good deal of attention (Harwood, 2004; Heilbron, 2008). The common question is understanding why epistemological approaches and analytical frameworks gained ascendancy and remained dominant in specific countries—such as behavioralism in the United States, semiology in France, empiricism in Britain, and system-thinking in Germany. The literature has underscored the importance of educational ideologies; the position of universities vis-à-vis politics, states, and markets; and the position of specific intellectual traditions in countries and regions. Philosophies about the mission of education espoused by academic institutions and institutionalized in educational policies and enforced by upper management shape scholarly work. Visions of higher education related to public service, elitist callings, market considerations, and national *Bildung* have influenced the evolution of academic cultures.

The relationship of universities vis-à-vis politics and commerce also has shaped academic cultures. Proximity to politics or market actors, reflected in universities' management, priorities, and funding, permeate expectations about research and publication. When universities lack autonomy vis-à-vis partisan and state politics or are closely linked to specific market actors, then the boundaries of academic work are narrower and blurred. Nonscholarly considerations weigh heavily in hiring, tenure, curricula, programs, and so on. Historically, the closeness between universities and state-building in European countries shaped the dominant understanding of academic research (Lindenfeld, 1997; Rocke, 2001). Links to the state, particularly in terms of specific policies or public service, influenced the purpose, funding, and uses of scientific and intellectual work and employment opportunities.

Finally, the peculiar position of disciplines within universities and public life also influences academic work. Disciplines and theories with prominent positions cast a wide shadow not only in specific fields of knowledge but in society and politics. Examples are the prominent position of philosophy in France, analytical philosophy in prewar Britain, and neoclassical economics in post-1970s United States. Aside from defining the standards of legitimate knowledge within a discipline, they set research questions and debates across the social sciences and humanities. Also, they are the intellectual homes of prominent public academics and influential schools of thought.

The amalgamation of these factors has resulted in distinctive national academic cultures. In his pioneering analysis, Galtung (1981) differentiates among Saxon, Teutonic, Gallic, and Nipponic academic cultures characterized by different paradigms, theories, ontologies, and styles of intellectual production. Recent works have also underscored the unique national characteristics of disciplines, such as economics (Fourcade, 2009), sociology (Calhoun, 2007; Kumar, 2001), international relations (Breitenbach, 2013;

Rosch, 2014), and anthropology (Barth, Gingrich, Parkin, & Silverman, 2005). Despite hopes for unified, global sciences, disciplines exhibit specific characteristics that result from particular national developments—the social position of universities and their relation to the state and the ascendancy of certain intellectual traditions in public life.

A Field in the (Re)Making

A similar argument could be made about the field of communication. Although the global dimensions of the field have not yet been fully mapped, existing studies suggest that national factors determined the particular characteristics of communication research across countries and regions.

Doubtlessly, unique national factors played critical roles in the emergence and consolidation of the field in the United States. Nowhere else do we find the confluence of intellectual and institutional factors that defined the field's research directions and analytical scaffolding, particularly during the interwar years and after World War II. Intellectually, the field developed from the sedimentation of the tradition of sociological studies on public opinion media effects coupled with growing interest in information science and social psychology set the intellectual parameters of the field (Dennis & Wartella, 2013). Also, the combination of philanthropic and government interest in specific communication questions shaped research agendas and charted analytical directions. As sponsors of landmark studies on media effects and propaganda, they gave the field an initial push that left a long-lasting imprint (Simpson, 1994).

Because similar conditions were absent, the field of communication developed differently elsewhere. Averbeck (2008) argues that the different historical evolution and roots of communication studies in France and Germany explains the primary different theoretical paradigms and disciplinary influences in each country. Whereas communication was initially aligned with culturalist and semiological perspectives and information studies in France, it grew out of studies of public opinion and philosophy in Germany (Löblich & Scheu, 2011). Other national histories draw similar conclusions about the particular genealogies and combination of factors in the history of communication studies (Alsina & Jimenez, 2010; First & Adoni, 2007).

Like the field of communication in general, particular areas of specialization developed differently, too. The study of intercultural communication in France, Germany, and the United States reflected distinctive intellectual debates and disciplinary traditions in each country (Averbeck-Lietz, 2013). Significant differences are also found in the study of intercultural communication in the United States and other countries (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2013; Martin, Nakayama, & Carbaugh, 2011). Nor did organizational communication develop along similar intellectual lines in the United States, France, and Germany (Cooren & Grosjean, 2010; Schoeneborn & Wehmeier, 2013; Taylor, 2011). The study of organization communication in Europe has not only a shorter history in Europe but different intellectual roots (Theis-Berglmair, 2013). Likewise, the emergence of health communication at the crossroads of social psychology, communication studies, and social marketing in the early 1970s was unique to the United States (Kreps & Bonaguro, 2009).

Outside the West, the field of communication also had different historical trajectories and intellectual progeny. Although it evolved similarly as an offshoot of various disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities, nowhere did media effects and social psychology have as strong a presence as they did in the United States. And the field developed in close contact with trends in communication research and other disciplines in the United States and some European countries, notably France and the United Kingdom. Cultures of communication research were not insular, but they have been connected to intellectual trends in the West (see Wang, 2010).

Communication studies in the global South developed from the blend of local philosophical, political, and religious traditions with influences from external intellectual trends. Although some scholars remained convinced that the field largely reflected external paradigms and concerns, the field has not been simply a projection of foreign paradigms. Exposure to and dialogue with Western research generated hybridized local scholarship.

For example, communication studies in the Middle East have been located at the intersections of the different influences by U.S. and Western European scholarship (Ayish, 2012). In Latin America, the blend of indigenous traditions and historical conditions coupled with influences, originally, from continental Marxism and French semiology, and, later, from British cultural studies, produced a distinctive current of communication thought (Waisbord, 2014b). The Latin American school of communication attests to the dynamic formation of academic cultures in which the transborder traffic of ideas is reinterpreted in light of local contexts and indigenous intellectual traditions. In Africa, varied Western intellectual influences have been reinterpreted in light of local developments and indigenous insights (Skjerkal, 2013; Tomaselli, 2012).

In summary, the field of communication developed differently across countries and regions. It was embedded in different intellectual trajectories and the histories of the social sciences and the humanities. The field has not only been characterized by theoretical and methodological pluralism, as in the West (Levy & Gurevitch, 1993); it also has also comprised multiple analytical foci. The study of communication has been associated with mass communication, media industries, media occupations, interpersonal and mediated communication, information studies, cultural studies, and semiology.

The National in Communication Studies

Questions about the globalization of communication studies need to be placed in the context of fragmented and national character of the field. What scenarios of translations are possible? If there is no single common academic culture in communication studies, how is translation possible? If research traditions are immersed in the particular national trajectories, what are the prospects for cosmopolitan scholarship in communication studies? What is the "in-betweenness" among academic cultures, the place where translation resides (Tymoczko, 2010)?

To address these questions, we need to be mindful of the national histories of communication studies and the social sciences. Put in terms of a classic debate about the purpose of higher education in the West, the Kantian ideal of cosmopolitan knowledge needs to be examined in the context of academic

cultures embedded in Humboldtian realities of national education and universities. It is not obvious that the impact of globalization is similar across disciplines and countries. Neither cosmopolitan scholarship nor the Americanization/homogenization of academic cultures is inevitable. The national character of academic cultures acts as a buffer against global trends. It might reinforce inward-looking mind-sets unconcerned with transnationalism or rebuff attempts to harmonize standards and rules identified with U.S. or European academic cultures.

On this issue, recent studies about the impact of globalization of the social sciences draw ambiguous conclusions. Some believe that the common use of English in international conferences and top-tier journals resolves translation challenges by fiat rather than as the result of the negotiation of meanings. Particular academic standards identified with U.S. academia become dominant due to several factors: first-mover advantages, the sheer volume of academic production, and funding (Aalbers, 2004; Bennett 2014; Jenkins, 2013; Paasi 2005). The establishment of a lingua franca forces global academic cultures to conform to established norms and practices of U.S. scholarship (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

Yet globalization neither erodes national distinctiveness nor imposes American academic cultures. The turn to globalized academia does not automatically lead to the adoption of common standards in analytical frameworks, argumentation, styles of writing, and so on. Just because scholars are linked with regional and international networks, it does not follow that academic cultures become diluted. The strength of national factors explains long-term tendencies that precede the current push to internationalization, such as the hybridization of theoretical frameworks as local academics adapt "traveling theories" (Said, 1983) to domestic concerns and/or blend them with indigenous insights. Consider the way British cultural studies was received and processed in the United States and other countries (Straton & Ang, 1996), or the persistence of dissimilar approaches in health communication in the global South (Obregón & Waisbord, 2012) despite the long-standing presence of social psychological theories originated in the United States. These examples suggest that global connectivity among academic cultures fosters unpredictable dynamics that result from blending and rearticulation of theories, concepts, and methods. "Lost in translation" is always a possibility when theories leave their original home.

Early globalization of Western communication research met different reactions in the global South. In Asia, whereas some scholars incorporated insights from foreign theories, others have argued for the need to ground communication studies in indigenous paradigms, religions, and philosophies that reflect local values and concerns (Chen & Miike 2006; Chen, Miyahara, & Kim, 2013; Hu, Zhang, & Ji, 2013; Miike, 2006). Similar reactions are found among communication scholars in Africa. Whereas some incorporated theoretical frameworks and methodologies originally developed in the West, others urged to embed communication studies in local and regional ethics (Ngomba, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2005; see Tomaselli, 2012).

In Latin America, the consumption of Western paradigms generated dissimilar reactions (Lander, 2000). The field did not hold all foreign paradigms equally suspicious in the name of preserving national and regional intellectual purity. Western communication and social theory was not distrusted or condemned in absolute terms. Rather, scholars selectively considered the suitability of theories and

questions for studying communication in the region. A line of argument has long questioned the ideological premises of the behaviorist and social psychological approaches to communication studies developed in the United States (Beltrán, 1975). This argument was originally grounded in the politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when the critique of capitalism, imperialism, and ideology in academic quarters spilled over the emergence of communication studies (Zermeño, 2012). Situated in university campuses that rejected the ivory tower model of higher education, communication research was conceived as part of the ideological battles in the region against dominant, administrative views of communication studies. Instead, a different position was taken vis-à-vis other Western theories such as European Marxism, French structuralism and semiology, and British cultural studies. These paradigms were embraced because they shared local intellectual politics. Whereas Marxism and structuralism resonated with critical approaches that shaped the field in the region, mainstream U.S. communication scholarship was criticized for its individualistic and functionalist ontological premises that ignored power, class, and geopolitics in global capitalism (Waisbord, 2014).

Past interactions between traveling research and local academic cultures offer no solid evidence to conclude that increased connectivity leads to the unification of the field, the disappearance of diversity, or the ascendancy of monocultural scholarship. A process of localization and adaptation of foreign theories seems more likely than streamlined global research under the domination of Northern paradigms (Connell, 2014; Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013; Suomela-Salmi & Dervin, 2009).

Globalization does not pull academic cultures away from local dynamics. Scholarship remains grounded in local academic cultures with particular expectations and codes. These are the “tribes” that influence or ultimately make decisions about employment and tenure and provide intellectual recognition and professional belonging. Academic cultures are nested in local institutions and power dynamics that are not easily transformed by internationalization.

Despite calls for studying global issues, interest in specific subject matters remains attached to particular development and problems in countries. This should not be surprising. Scholars, just like fellow citizens, live in localized worlds with specific preoccupations and priorities. Research strongly drifts toward the national even though globalization has penetrated academic structures. We live at a time when cross-national comparative research has received attention (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012), and the notion that “we should be all comparativists” is appealing. Calls to “think global” and “de-Westernize” are common in the literature (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). Methodological nationalism is condemned for perpetuating narrow national agendas that ignore planetary challenges and essentializing visions that step over multiperspective and minority views.

Yet the national refuses to go away from research agendas. This is neither positive nor negative. We should not fall into a maximalist position that believes that only global issues are worth studying or that dismisses national cases as outdated, modernist leftovers in today’s global world. National studies can be virtuous or problematic, depending on how they are approached and positioned in a body of literature. They provide limited evidence for theory building and generalizability, but they might yield valuable theoretical and conceptual insights. They might be embedded in false universalism and neglect of

historical and contextual factors; or, instead, they might motivate cross-national studies to assess the applicability of conclusions to specific local or national cases.

The problem is not the focus on the national per se but, rather, the dissimilar presence of national research agendas in the globalized academia. Certainly, globalization opens opportunities for scholarship from the global South to gain broader attention and to engage in South-to-South dialogue. However, it does not flatten inequalities in the position of various traditions and perspectives in social research (Mosbah-Natanson & Gingras, 2014). Globalization further raises the international profile of theories and questions that originated in the West. It catapults U.S. scholarship to a prominent position and consolidates a transnational European field of research. Linguistic advantage coupled with the strength of existing professional and research networks reinforce the position of scholarship based in the North Atlantic.

This situation expectedly favors specific national research agendas. It gives prominence to thematic interests among U.S.-based and Europe-based scholars. To provide examples close to my expertise in the study of news and politics, interest in news coverage of election campaigns and war and the reporting of Big Data in newsrooms have attracted a great deal of attention from U.S.-based journalism and political communication scholars. Likewise, European researchers have paid close attention to the impact of media systems and news content on trust and political knowledge as well as the mediatization of politics. No question, these are important issues that deserve close inspection. However, global attention to issues that are of interest to Western scholarship marginalizes questions that are relevant in other regions—the complex relationships between journalism, religion, and ethnicity; media clientelism; media and armed conflict; news and humanitarian crises; corruption in the news media; and so forth. Therefore, the danger is that Western thematic preoccupations overshadow non-Western questions in the globalized academia.

Translation and Cosmopolitanism

Recent trends suggest that the dynamics of internalization dovetails better with the forces of specialization and fragmentation than unification in the field of communication. Various specializations have become internationalized, although with a strong North Atlantic accent. Specialized journals across communication areas (e.g., health communication, digital media, news/journalism and politics, media industries and cultures, feminist media studies, public relations, language) have become more receptive to research produced in different regions of the world. Also, increased interest in cross-national, comparative studies has been visible within particular areas and divisions in the field (see Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). It is harder to find, however, a similar trend across theoretical, epistemological, and methodological communities.

Translation studies gives us insights to explain this disparity. Translation demands commonalities as well as a willingness to overcome differences. Thematic specializations share theoretical and empirical questions and conceptual vocabulary that connects geographically dispersed scholars. These connections facilitate translation—what Walter Benjamin (2012) called the interlaying of meaning among different languages. To specialists, the appeal of globalization is obvious: It widens the pool of findings and

arguments around specific theoretical and empirical questions—news framing, the impact of information campaigns on ideational factors, the dynamics of confirmation bias, the perpetuation of “echo chambers” in information settings. It does not encourage, however, crossing academic cultures. Globalization does not inevitably stimulate the sensibility of translation—doubting that meanings and affiliations are obvious across cultures and occupying an in-between place to transcend difference.

Translation across disciplinary cultures of communication research is exceedingly more complicated than across thematic specializations. The former are divided by conceptual terminology, theoretical affiliations, epistemological premises, normative allegiances, and methodological diversity. Lacking a common canon, these cultures are more resistant to cross-bridging scholarship. Translatability demands, as Benjamin affirms, the kinship of languages. Translation assumes that differences can be bridged by transplanting meaning across formal systems, whether linguistic systems or academic cultures. It invites scholars to work in between traditions (Aalbers, 2013). Yet it is hard to envision how translating works if the communities of communication research lack intellectual kinship. Without common elements, it is hard to find ways to reconcile differences and develop common values. Specific cultures of specialization are not obviously commensurable.

Increased global connectivity lays the institutional foundations for a globalized academic field. It fosters comparative studies and cross-cultural exchanges and diversifies the analytical pool. These are not insignificant outcomes considering that the field of communication historically developed in a limited geographic area and drew from particular national experiences and questions. A globalized field, however, does not inevitably lead to a shift in intellectual temperaments anchored in disciplinary positions and national academic cultures. The pool of available data grows more diverse, at least in English-language publications and conferences. Yet it does not inevitably stimulate interest in translating differences across epistemological branches and parallel lines of communication research. Bridge crossing might be desirable, but it will not gain much traction as long as scholars are, at best, mildly interested in finding intellectual kinship across difference. Without kinship, there is no translation—no search for commonness among difference.

Finding and nurturing intellectual kinship requires openness to others. A dialogue between self and stranger, translation requires mutual curiosity and the welcoming of differences, as Ricoeur (2006) points out. It demands that participants are willing to engage with others and be open to mutual understanding. Interscholarly interest, cultural open-mindedness, and receptiveness to difference are basic conditions for translation across academic cultures.

This understanding of translation recalls the ideal of cosmopolitanism. Understood as the possibility of imagining oneself as part of a broader community, cosmopolitanism entails unshackling minds from the harnesses of tradition and provincialism. A cosmopolitan perspective is characterized by reaching out to different others guided by the values of sympathy and togetherness. It is aimed at nurturing common bonds by recognizing differences and shared conditions. Intransigent minds do not make good cosmopolitan academic citizens. Translation is a mode to articulate and express reciprocal relationship across difference that requires the kind of inquisitive, decentering, other-orientedness that defines cosmopolitan scholarship.

Thus, translation and cosmopolitanism demand similar dispositions: recognizing and overcoming difference. Neither one can be reduced to simply tolerating difference or acknowledging the diversity of languages and academic cultures. Accepting different academic cultures based on national variables or disciplinary foundations should not be seen as translation. Translation demands a cosmopolitan eagerness to cultivate zones of contact and to engage with others and supersede cultural differences.

Conclusion

The global mobility and connectivity of scholars should not be mistaken for bridging disciplinary and ontological differences. Rose-tinted glasses are not particularly useful to get a good view of the impact of academic globalization on the field of communication. Panglossian idealism and cursory observations about cosmopolitan scholarship are of little help if they are not complemented with insights about how to overcome ingrained insularity and academic nativism.

Globalization makes it possible for ideas and scholarly cultures to meet (Duszak, 1997), but it does not necessarily adumbrate postnational sensibilities. Transgeographical connectedness alone does not spearhead the kind of transformations in academic cultures identified with cosmopolitanism, such as appreciating multiperspective scholarship or reassessing the nationalistic assumptions of research paradigms. The field can become internationalized without engendering perspectives that transcend geographical, disciplinary, or epistemological divisions (see Hafez, 2013). Just as it does not dislocate nation-centered academic cultures, globalization does not inevitably forge a cosmopolitan sensibility. Actually, it drives mixed reactions. It might prompt nativist opposition against academic internationalization and essentialist calls for national thought. Or it might have limited impact on the field, drawing interest mostly from quarters already interested in international/intercultural scholarship.

We may hope communication research includes a plurality of global voices, but we still lack a clear path to overcome different understandings about quality standards, conceptual languages, and epistemological premises. Translation demands assessing whether and how particular differences across academic cultures can be negotiated. Or, perhaps the field is bound to be the home of multiple tongues, a situation which, to borrow Derrida's (1991) observation about the Tower of Babel, limits the possibility of translation. Like the post-Babelian world, an open academic field with scattered, multivocal specializations makes common understanding and unified meaning impossible.

The question is whether academic interest in promoting dialogue across intellectual heteroglossia is as strong as the desire to live comfortably within homophonic academic tribes. If the way the field historically developed foreshadows the future, then globalization will continue to facilitate conversations among specialized academic cultures around the world, but it might not prompt wide enthusiasm in transcending difference. In a field brimming with academic diversity cultures, difference may be tolerated, yet toleration might not imply actual engagement with difference and the politics of translation.

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