

# **A complexity approach to translation policy studies: considering attractors, constraints, incipient conditions and subsequent conditions**

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The nature of a translation policy lies in the interactions between phenomena of translation management (legislation on translation activities), translation practices (actual translation activities) and translation beliefs (the values assigned to translation management and practices) (Meylaerts 2017). In the emerging processes of translation policy phenomena, particular things are more likely to happen than others. These possibilities are the trajectories that a translation policy tends to follow. The question then is: What causes a translation policy in a certain context to gravitate towards a particular trajectory rather than others? This study aims to explain why and how a particular trajectory of translation policy phenomena emerges and stabilizes during one trial (Trial A) at a local court (Court A) in China. Based on ethnographic data, this study applies Marais' proposal to identify attractors, constraints, incipient conditions and subsequent conditions (Marais 2019a, 2019b). It shows that the socio-cultural and legal-managerial givens of state 0, as the incipient conditions, cause an attractor, i.e. the tendency for Court A to employ a court interpreter for Trial A. The moment this attractor is selected, certain possibilities enabled by bilingual judges, such as trial efficiency and direct communication between the judge and the defendants, are excluded and become constraints. These constraints limit the roles of the court interpreter and contribute to a trajectory featured by the loss of information through interpreting. Meanwhile, what has not been realized in the incipient conditions (e.g. specific regulations on court interpreting) becomes an incipient constraint. Influenced by this incipient constraint and other constraints, the court interpreting tends to take the form of both interpreting and non-interpreting. Such an attractor drives things to move more in line with the existing trajectory, where the role of court interpreting has been acknowledged but has not been fully fulfilled.

## **References:**

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