

ABSTRACTS

Hermes 42-2009

THEMATIC SECTION

Translation Studies: Focus on the Translator

ARTICLES

Andrew Chesterman

The Name and Nature of Translator Studies

A number of recent research tendencies in Translation Studies focus explicitly on the translator in some way, rather than on translations as texts. These trends might be grouped under the term “Translator Studies”. The article argues that this new focus is inadequately represented in Holmes’ classic map. Evidence of the recent trends is found especially in translation sociology, but also in translation history and in research into the translator’s decision-making processes. A broad outline of Translator Studies would cover sociology, culture and cognition, all looking at the translator’s agency, in different ways.

Anthony Pym

Humanizing Translation History

The structuralist principles of systems-based Translation Studies tend to conceal the social roles played by translators in mediating between cultures. Attention to slightly alternative principles might be able to initiate a progressive humanization of Translation Studies, possibly alerting scholars to phenomena previously overlooked. Two such principles are illustrated here on the basis of Hispanic translation history. First, if attention is paid to translators and only then to the texts they produce, the subjectivities thus revealed tend to display multidiscursive involvement (translators usually do more than translate), complex cultural allegiances (they are not always faithful or loyal to one side), and physical mobility (they tend not to stay in just one place). The second idea is that translators can be seen as operating in professional intercultures, where their membership tends to be based on purely professional criteria (not birthright), they may adopt secondary positions with respect to cross-cultural communication (they tend not to initiate negotiations), and their institutions are often particularly transitory (based on contact-renewed networks rather than sovereign space). The application and exploration of these principles might ideally move Translation Studies toward the wider questions of Intercultural Studies.

Hanna Risku & Angela Dickinson

Translators as Networkers: The Role of Virtual Communities

Recent years have seen a rise in the importance of virtual and real-life knowledge sharing communities and communities of practice across many fields of private and commercial interest, including professional translation. This article examines the characteristics of knowledge sharing communities in general, identifies their key elements, looks at the motivation for membership and presents an empirical study of life in a thriving virtual translation community. In doing so, it draws on the results of a literature review combined with a participant observation based study and member survey of a major virtual translation community. The results indicate that virtual translation communities can be lively platforms and offer translators a forum not only for sharing expert knowledge and collaborating, but also for keeping in touch with like-minded individuals.

Ebru Diriker

Meta-discourse as a Source for Exploring the Professional Image(s) of Conference Interpreters

Simultaneous conference interpreters, like all other professionals, operate with a 'professional identity' that shapes, and is shaped, by the way a variety of actors and institutions inside and outside the field of activity see and describe the profession(al). Departing from the assumption that the professional image of conference interpreters is largely (meta-)discursive in nature, this paper analyzes how various actors and institutions depict conference interpreting and interpreters in their discourses, whether the images propagated converge or diverge from each other, and what the divergences may imply for the profession and the professional.

Kaisa Koskinen

Going Localised – Getting Recognised. The Interplay of the Institutional and the Experienced Status of Translators in the European Commission

This paper explores how and whether the different institutional and organisational contexts affect translators' professional activities and professional identities. The site researched is the European Commission, where the changing political impetus has recently instigated a new role for some of the translators. For them, the institutional framework has thus changed substantially. This presents an opportunity to research how institutionally expressed status affects the status as experienced by the translators themselves. The data consists of institutional documents as well as interview and observation data from two different settings, a traditional translation unit in Luxembourg (2004) and the local representation of the European Commission in Helsinki (2008). The results indicate that the institutional and physical space occupied by the translators can drastically change their experienced status and motivation even within a single organisational setting.

David Katan

Translation Theory and Professional Practice: A Global Survey of the Great Divide

This paper is the result of a global survey carried out this year to around 1000 translators and interpreters, the majority of whom had university training in the area. The object of the survey was to investigate the habitus of the translator and to compare it with the academic belief in functionalism and the empowerment of the translator either as a mediator or as a social agent. The replies indicated strong responsibility towards the original text, and very little towards the reader or the wider community. Also, while the scholars appear to be convinced that their theories support the professional translator, in practice it would seem that university trained translators (and interpreters) rate theory very low on their list of ideal university training.

Literature regarding the term "profession" is discussed as is what distinguishes an occupation from a profession. Classic trait theory suggests that a profession requires a number of minimum requisites, such as a well-grounded school of theory, influential professional bodies and professional exams. The 'professional' translators and interpreters were asked to explain in their own words what makes translating a profession. They also replied to questions on status.

As a result of the replies it was possible to identify a large homogeneous yet scattered cottage industry. Their 'professionalism' lies in their individually honed competencies in the field. They are dedicated and mainly satisfied wordsmiths, who take pride in their job. They decry "the cowboys" (from secretaries to students) while realising the seriousness of the competition due mainly to the very low status accredited to translators worldwide. Interpreters, on the other hand, saw themselves – and were seen by translators – as having a relatively high professional autonomy. Interestingly, relatively few of the respondents had only one "main role". Gender is seen here as an important factor in this grouping.

Finally, as a result of the replies, it is asked whether we (academics/translation trainers) are providing the theory and the training that will encourage the development of the profession – if indeed it can be defined as one.

Bente Jacobsen

The Community Interpreter: A Question of Role

Studies of conference interpreting and community interpreting differ from studies of the translation of written texts in their object of study. Thus, unlike studies of written translations, studies of interpreting have traditionally focused on the individual performing the translation, i.e. *the interpreter*, as opposed to *interpreting*. Moreover, whereas research in conference interpreting has traditionally centred on issues connected with the process of interpreting, research in community interpreting has traditionally centred on role perceptions and expectations among users of interpreting services and interpreting practitioners. This article presents an overview of relevant community interpreting literature and shows how the topic of interpreter role has always dominated the field.

OTHER ARTICLES

Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera

Specialised Lexicography for Learners: Specific Proposals for the Construction of Pedagogically-oriented Printed Business Dictionaries

The *function theory of lexicography* argues that specialised lexicographical products must help learners to transform their information needs into aspects of knowledge of the discipline, and of its discursive properties. Lexicographers, then, must combine information and data access with the user's need for information and knowledge. To achieve this aim they need to devise theories providing solutions to different lexicographical problems. One such theory has recently been proposed by Tarp (2008), who claims that there are four categories which are central to a general theory of learner's lexicography: users, user situation, user needs, and dictionary assistance. This paper focuses on *dictionary assistance* and addresses several lexicographical issues connected with polysemy: the selection of the lemmata of some printed English-Spanish/Spanish-English business dictionaries, their entry structures, sense differentiation, and sense ordering. The analysis leads the author to discuss some proposals with the aim of making business dictionaries more pedagogically oriented, and to include a set of principles pedagogically-oriented business dictionaries must have. They are illustrated in a model entry which has been compiled by rearranging one of the entries studied according to the proposals and principles previously discussed.

Mette Hjort-Pedersen & Dorrit Faber

Uncertainty in the Cognitive Processing of a Legal Scenario: A Process Study of Student Translators

This article describes a process oriented case study of student translators' translation of a legal text from Danish into English. Generally, when students are asked to translate a complex legal text their reaction to some degree demonstrates lack of confidence in their ability to perform successfully both as students and after graduation. On the basis of a think-aloud experiment involving four groups of students we focus on how they handle uncertainty in the translation process, and explore whether it is possible to point to factors that are likely to make students go about the task of legal translation with more confidence. Two parameters are focused on: the students' access to tentative translation equivalents both at the syntactic and lexical levels and the nature of reflection or argumentation performed to support their final choices. The ultimate purpose of this study is pedagogical in that we hope to be able to point to focusing points that will help students in their learning process.

Pierre Lerat

La combinatoire des termes. Exemple : *nectar de fruits*

Terminology is henceforth based on textual analysis, although its methodology remains paradigmatic. Concordances need to be interpreted, and a theory of combinations is needed. In this article, Harris' (1968, 1976, 1988) « operator-argument » theory is used, though words, concepts and terms are strictly distinguished. Specialised texts are made up of words as are every text, but some of them denote special concepts, and these are terms. The case of *nectar de fruits*, as used in EU regulations and FAO *Codex alimentarius* and on corporate websites, is used to show the relevance of combinatory analysis of concepts and of terms in establishing the ontology of the fruit industry.

REVIEW ARTICLES

Hanne Tange

Intercultural Alternatives – two Nordic Books on Intercultural Communication

The article compares two recent Nordic anthologies on intercultural communication. One volume, Askehave/Norlyk's *Meanings and Messages* (2006) addresses the topic from a specific, business-oriented viewpoint, whereas the second collection, Dahl et al.'s *Bridges of Understanding* (2006) builds on a broader definition of the subject. This reflects on the contents, with the former relying on business as a central point of reference, while the latter highlights theoretical differences and interdisciplinarity. The review assesses the books in relation to the teaching of intercultural communication, discussing editorial aims, theoretical outlook, approach to culture, and accessibility. It concludes that the books are important because of the way they attempt to communicate Nordic research, but also that they do not quite meet the requirements that this reader makes from course literature in intercultural communication.