

Author and reader in mind: Exploring the social construction of knowledge about ST authors and TT readers

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An established truth in our field is that translators should think about their readers; it is at the heart of functionalist approaches to translation and has also generated newer applications such as User-Centered Translation, or UCT (Suojanen, Koskinen, Tuominen 2015). This 'thinking about the reader' is often approached from a practical and prescriptive perspective, with advice for (student) translators to draw on their existing cultural knowledge or trace implied readers by analyzing the ST. In UCT, the translator is also encouraged to construct archetypal personas and, whenever possible, draw on empirical evidence. Another well-established idea is the need for translators to think about the ST author (or sender) while translating, preferably through systematic text analysis and research. This process is understood to guide the selection of appropriate translation strategies.

While these approaches are practical and intuitive, albeit prescriptive, there seem to be few socio-cognitive explanations of how translators actually construct their conceptualizations of both ST authors and TT readers. In this presentation, I suggest that social representations theory (Moscovici 1984), developed in social psychology, offers one theoretical framework through which to explain this phenomenon. My aim is to introduce the main tenets of the theory and explore how it could be applied to the social construction of knowledge in the field of translation – in this case, knowledge about ST authors and TT readers. Underlying this approach is an assumption that human cognition is fundamentally social and relational, which will affect our mental processes even in (ostensibly) solitary activities such as translating.

References:

- Moscovici, S. (1984) The phenomenon of social representations. In R. Farr, & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social Representations*, (pp. 3–69). Cambridge University Press.
- Suojanen, T., Koskinen, K., & Tuominen, T. (2015). *User-Centered Translation*. London & New York: Routledge.