

Challenges of non-standard input for translation and interpreting

Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow

Michaela Albl-Mikasa

ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences

Working conditions, time constraints, and stress have all been associated with disturbances to the translation process (cf. Hansen 2006), which can be revealed through the use of process research methods. The quality of source texts has also been explicitly identified as an issue in surveys of professional translators (e.g. Lafeber 2012) and interpreters (Kalina 2005), and in recent workplace studies (e.g. Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017). Researchers using observational methods such as keystroke logging have suggested that the typing mistakes made by translators when they encounter translation challenges might be indicators of stress and cognitive effort (e.g. Muñoz 2009). Similar phenomena have been noted in interpreting tasks, as indicated by hesitations or ‘brain stoppers’ (Albl-Mikasa 2014: 23). If translators and interpreters encounter resistance in their tasks, for example by difficulties in extracting meaning from non-standard input, then flow can be interrupted and performance affected. In this presentation, we explain how we are investigating the potentially compromising effect of non-standard input with a variety of methods to gain information about the internal processes involved. The mixed-method approach in our project focuses on determining the cognitive and stress-related impact of processing non-standard vs. standard language input. Evidence from neuroscience suggests that cognitive load, negative emotions and stress – which have all been associated with the use of foreign languages – trigger an inhibitory mechanism that encourages avoidance. Translators and interpreters do not have the option of avoiding the comprehension of non-standard input once they have accepted the task of transferring it into another language, however. We are thus especially interested in understanding how they cope with this task compared to students and untrained multilinguals and will outline the implications of this type of research for professional practice and training.

References

- Albl-Mikasa, M. (2014). English as a Lingua Franca in International Conferences, *Interpreting and Translation Studies (Korea)*, 18 (3), 17–42.
- Ehrensberger-Dow, M. & Massey, G. (2017). Socio-technical Issues in Professional Translation Practice, *Translation Spaces*, 6 (1), 104–121.
- Hansen, G. (2006). *Erfolgreich Übersetzen: Entdecken und Beheben von Störquellen*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Kalina, S. (2005). Quality Assurance for Interpreting Processes, *Meta*, 50 (2), 768–784.
- Lafeber, A. (2012). Translation Skills and Knowledge – Preliminary Findings of a Survey of Translators and Revisers Working at Inter-governmental Organizations, *Meta*, 57 (1), 108–131.
- Muñoz Martín, R. (2009). Typos & Co. In S. Göpferich, A. L. Jakobsen, & I. M. Mees (eds), *Behind the Mind. Methods, Models and Results in Translation Process Research*. 167–189. Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur Press.