

Perspective taking in translation: pragmatic and psychological views at the interface

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From a relevance-theoretic (RT) perspective, translation is naturally an activity that involves the interpretive use of language, i.e., translators are constantly seeking to establish interpretive resemblance between correlated passages in the source and target texts by means of representing what someone said or thought (GUTT, 2000). While encoding linguistic items in the target text as well as the communicative cues related to them, translators make use of the ability to represent in one's own mind how other people represent states of affairs in their minds. From the pragmatic point of view, such an ability is understood as an instance of metarepresentation, that is, speaker meanings are attributed on the basis of utterances (WILSON, 2012). From the psychological point of view, however, this same ability is understood as a metapsychological capacity, that is, speaker meanings are attributed on the basis of predicting and explaining behavior – communicative or not (PAPP, 2006). In psychology studies, this ability is known as theory of mind (ToM) or mindreading. Recently, building on neuroimaging evidence, Szpak (2017) presented an overarching theoretical view at the interface between these two frameworks. According to Szpak, metarepresentation in RT and mindreading in ToM intersect each other, as they are abilities that interpose different aspects of a global cognitive function, namely, perspective taking. In this presentation, we argue that translation is an activity that involves perspective taking in cases in which attributive representations are required. In doing so, we present evidence from a neuroimaging study carried out with novice and professional translators, in which brain regions commonly related to the ability of making inferences about the speaker's communicative intentions (left inferior parietal lobe and left medial frontal gyrus) are discussed in the light of neuroimaging and translation studies.

Keywords: fMRI, metarepresentation, perspective taking, theory of mind, translation studies

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