

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION STUDIES

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TRANSLATION PSYCHOLOGY: RETHINKING AND PERSPECTIVES

ПСИХОЛОГІЯ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ: ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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The long history of interaction and bridge-building between Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS) and the discipline of psychology is the subject of research of the paper. The cognitive perspective in translation psychology is driving scholars interested in studying translation processes towards the cognitive sciences, and research in Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies (CTIS) has grown significantly in the past decade, with particular emphasis on borrowing cognitivist methods, models, and research designs. The recent upswing in translation psychology-related objects of study in the field has stressed the need for a broader framework of analysis, since not all current research avenues strictly match that traditionally labelled as ‘translation process research’ or ‘psycho-translation studies’ [2, p. 68]. Due to the current scope and multifaceted nature of expanding research field, ‘translation psychology’ seems a more inclusive label that can encompass all related perspectives [8, p. 55].

Although translation psychology emerged at the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s [5, p. 32], it is interesting to note that a psychologist had already approached the study of mental processes when rendering content

from Latin into German back in 1910, publishing probably the first known contribution to the psychology of translation [6].

With the onset of the ‘empirical turn’ in translation studies in the 1990s, participants’ experiences with Think-Aloud Protocols (TAPs) heralded process-oriented approaches which aimed to study, among others, phenomena such as language comprehension and production, attention, memory, perception, decision-making, and automatic and effortful processing in novices and experts [6]. Already many scholars had suggested the need for adopting a broad psychological approach to translation [6], capable of explaining far more than what happens in translators’ minds while at work and ranging «from cognition (perception, memory, learning, and problem-solving) to affect or emotion (motivation, attitudes) as well as personality» [3, p. 193]. In fact, the analysis of the subjective and personality traits of research participants in process-oriented empirical studies soon became viewed as a valuable endeavor. On the one hand, the high levels of variability detected between participants had to be explained [3, p. 195]. On the other hand, subject profiling was deemed an important factor in the identification and quantification of such differences in order to control experiments, given that they can act both as independent variables manipulated by researchers to gauge their effect and as extraneous variables not directly related to the research purpose [4, p. 115].

In this context, translation psychology can be understood as the study of translators as complex individuals functioning as a whole, of the underlying emotional, cognitive, behavioral and social factors at play, and their interaction with the translators’ professional environment and with other agents participating in the translation process [1, p. 69]. In this way, translation psychology can embrace not only research into the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social functioning of translators and all other participants potentially involved in the translation process but also into «the minds of the recipients of translations, i.e., reception research» [3, p. 194].

Beyond any doubt, translation psychology has already achieved encouraging results, but there is still a long road ahead. Recent research development has not been homogeneous in all subfields of study. On the one hand, while areas such as personality and emotion thrive, others like cultural and cross-cultural psychology remain almost unexplored. On the other hand, while fields such as cognitive translation studies have grown and matured over the last six decades and, for some authors, may even be «taking shape as an autonomous field of study» [7, p. 17], the organizational and social domains of translation psychology are still in their infancy.

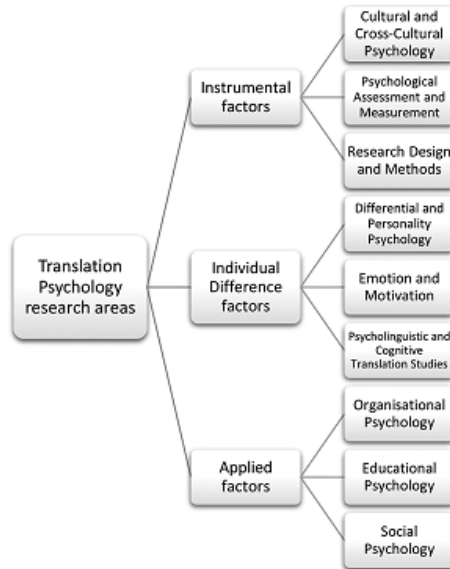


Fig.1. Research areas in translation psychology

On the one hand, a better understanding of how translators manage the emotional facet of their profession is vital to furthering our knowledge of the relationship between cognitive and affective factors and the way they intertwine during the translation task. More research intended to determine how and to what extent personality features interact with the translation process and product is also needed. On the other hand, ongoing efforts to adapt and develop specific data collection instruments with appropriate psychometric properties need to be multiplied, and special attention should be paid to improving the reliability and ecological validity of internet-mediated research. Furthermore, current research directions in organizational psychology which are of potential interest for the discipline include translators' coping strategies and workplace relationships in an increasingly technology-driven professional market, together with the factors that are likely to contribute to the psychological capital and well-being of translators [6].

Careful consideration should also be given to approaches that can provide a source of innovation and improvement for translator training programs, including the exploration of the explanatory potential of the self-determination and social cognitive theories and the evaluation of different teaching

methodologies and assessment techniques to promote the development of translation students' psychological skills and creativity. It would also be worthwhile to further explore the potential benefits of mentoring programs to facilitate the incorporation of trainees in the technology-driven, demanding, and competitive translation work environment.

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