Methods of accessing metalinguistic awareness: a question of quality?

Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow & Alexander Künzli
Institute of Translation and Interpreting (IUED)

International Research Workshop
"Methodology in Translation Process Research"
6-8 April 2009, Graz

Accessing metalinguistic awareness

Outline of our presentation:
• introduction to the “Capturing Translation Processes” project
• methodology of our research (multi-method approach / “progression analysis”)
• retrospective and concurrent verbalizations
• various ways of addressing the question of quality
• outlook and discussion

Methodology of our research

Long-term monitoring of translation processes:
• students at three points in their translation careers
• professionals with different levels of experience
• different language combinations (G-E, E-G, F-G, G-F, I-G, G-I)
• translation into L1 or L2

Multi-method approach/“Progression analysis” (Perrin 2003)

Level 1: translation situation
Level 2: translation movements and practices
Level 3: translation strategies
Level 4: translation products

Methodology of our research

Level 1: translation situation
• linguistic and educational background information
  – L1 German, L2 English
  – 5 recent graduates of ZHAW 4-year translation program
    (grunieve, maureflu, schollin, wickibar, zoellliv)
  – enrolled in 1st semester of interpreting program
• participant observation at the workplace
  – usability lab in translation institute
  – paid to participate in six sessions of “eye-tracking pilot study”
    (introduction, familiarization with usability lab, translation with RVP, sight
    translation, TAP training, translation with TAP)
  – translated into the L2 (RVP) or into the L1 (TAP)

Methodology of our research

Level 2: translation movements and practices
• keystroke logging
  – InputLog 4.0 (van Waes & Leijten 2006)
• S-notation (Kollberg & Severinson-Eklundh 2001)
  – positions and order of insertions and deletions
• progression graphs (Perrin 2003)
  – development of target text over time
• screenshot recordings of translation processes (Camtasia)
  – all screen events (typing, searches, formatting, etc.)
• eye-tracking of translation processes
  – location, focus, movements, etc.

Methodology of our research

Level 3: translation strategies
• concurrent verbalizations (TAPs)
  OR
• cue-based retrospective verbal protocols (RVPs)
  – replays of screenshot recordings to elicit verbalizations
• analysis of transcripts
  (e.g. problem areas in progression graphs and/or rich points)
• coding of propositions and practices (Hyperresearch)
• inferring strategies
Methodology of our research

Level 4: translation products

• intermediate versions
  (choice of lexis, formulation of individual sentences, etc.)
• target texts
  – overall quality
  – solutions to specific translation problems

Retrospective and concurrent verbalization

• Leow & Morgan-Short (2004): (1) critique that concurrent verbalization results in invalid data in SSLA is based on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. (2) Concurrent verbalization, although extending time-on-task, does not result in altered internal processing. (3) Observation of non-reactivity applies to well-defined and ill-defined tasks. (4) Question of reactivity and veridicality are fruitful areas of investigation in research methodology.

⇒

• Small-scale research project at ZHAW to study intraindividual variation in translating: trainee translators translating three texts from L2, L3 and L4 into L1, as well as one text from L1 into L2. Two texts translated with concurrent verbalization, two without.

Retrospective and concurrent verbalization


⇒

1. To (re)analyze concurrent data either linearly or selectively, but in any case exhaustively.
2. To ascertain what information we obtain through each type of verbal report: retrospective or concurrent verbalization.

Retrospective and concurrent verbalization

Extract from a TAP (English ST, “German TT”)

“mehr gefährliche produkte” banned muss man auf deutsch irgendwie anders machen, weil man kann ja nicht, da gibt es kein einzelnes wort. das heißt, man muss es irgendwie in mehreren wörtern.
also “die europäische kommission” is expected to ...
ja erwartet, aber das könnte man eigentlich gerade weglassen, ich mache einfach “wird am” ...
thursday ist, nein, tuesday, wednesday, thursday ist “donnerstag”.
a rapid rise in the number of dangerous goods.
“wird am Donnerstag” a rapid rise, “einen schnellen anstieg der anzahl” aber, das “schnell” ist irgendwie nicht gut, aber ich schreibe jetzt mal “eines schnellen anstiegs der anzahl gefährlicher produkte”.

Retrospective and concurrent verbalization

Extract from a RVP (German ST, “English TT”)

und habe einfach mal los übersetzt, relativ wörtlich.
und gleichzeitig immer wieder die wörter nachgeschaut, die ich, die mir nicht selber gerade in den sinn gekommen sind.
onelectrogeräte wollte ich nachher noch im pons nachschauen, weil ich nicht ganz überzeugt war von der übersetzung vom leo. und das hat mir dann viel besser gefallen.

retrospective and concurrent verbalization

Addressing the question of quality

Various ways of addressing the question of quality:

• differences in the patterns of the processes (progression graphs)
• distribution of time in each phase
• distribution of comments in each phase
• types of comments in each phase
• global measures of the translation products (target texts)
• rich points (translation problems) and uncertainty markers
Addressing the question of quality

Dangerous toys from China

"In 2008, EU states [..] state, it becomes increasingly clear that withdraw dangerous toys and electric shock devices off the market from circulation."

(According to Meglena Kuneva, an EU commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, the last year's EU authorities banned approximately one third of goods from markets compared with 2006."

She also announced on Thursday [..] say in Brussels [..] for example, items such as [..] furry teddy bears, hairdryers, cleaning supplies [..] had proved dangerous.

According to Meglena Kuneva, an EU-

mission [..] last year [..] ______EU authorities [..] banned approximately one third of goods from markets compared with 2006. [..] last year [..] ______EU authorities [..] banned approximately one third of goods from markets compared with 2006.

Last year, EU authorities [..] banned approximately one third of goods from markets compared with 2006.

She also announced on Thursday [..] say in Brussels [..] for example, items such as [..] furry teddy bears, hairdryers, cleaning supplies [..] had proved dangerous.
Addressing the question of quality

Percentage of time spent in each phase

Proportion of verbalization in each phase

Proportion of verbalization in each phase (all verbalizations)

Proportion of verbalization in each phase (without ST and TT read aloud)

Types of comments in each phase of RVPs:
- Orientation phase: read, terms, commission, tools, format
- Translation phase: lexis, syntax, terms, search, revise, errors, format
- Revision phase: read, lexis, syntax, format, errors, search, revision

Types of comments in each phase of TAPs:
- Orientation phase: read, terms, commission
- Translation phase: lexis, syntax, terms, search, errors, format
- Revision phase: read, lexis, syntax, search, alternatives

Solutions to specific translation problems
1. Pragmatic translation problems
2. Convention-specific translation problems
3. Linguistic translation problems

6 translation problems identified in English ST TAP group > control group
10 translation problems identified in German ST RVP group > control group
Addressing the question of quality

Uncertainty markers

1. dangerous fungus that is a mushroom I think - epistemic modality
2. It must be commissioned and it must be consumer protection too - deontic modality
3. maybe it is a specific expression in the UE - adverbial hedge
4. is she from Surrey or her trading office? - explicit question
5. It should actually work if I do it like this - hypothesis
6. It is not that difficult a text but appearances could be deceiving - conditional
7. I wasn’t sure how to arrange the sentence elements - direct expression

Addressing the question of quality

Two types of uncertainty markers in RVP

1. Uncertainty regarding an aspect in the translation process itself
   “here with this beanstandeten I have I am not really sure what that means”

2. Uncertainty regarding the correct recollection of what was happening in the translation process
   “and then I don’t know what I did next”

Linguistic manifestations of uncertainty phenomena

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>RVP (%) (number)</th>
<th>TAP (%) (number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outlook: investigating translation competence

Translation competence includes not only:

- metalinguistic awareness (ability to reflect upon and manipulate languages)
- tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty (reconciliation of optimality and feasibility)
- but also
- optimization of transfer between languages (exploitation of positive and avoidance of negative transfer)
- compensation for the limitations of external resources (knowledge about which external resources to access and when)

References


References (cont’d)


Miriam Knoblauch has written this text. The text is primarily written in English, with some German and French terms. It discusses the question of quality in translation, focusing on uncertainty markers in RVP and linguistic manifestations of uncertainty phenomena. The outlook section highlights the importance of translation competence, including metalinguistic awareness, tolerance of ambiguity, and optimization of transfer between languages. The references list includes works on translation studies, such as Ellis and Wilson's project, which involves S-notation analysis for studying writing processes.
