Cognitive Effort and Contextual Effect in Translation: A Relevance-theoretic Approach

Fabio Alves

Abstract

This paper looks at the relationship between cognitive effort and contextual effect with respect to the interface between inferential processing, problem-solving and decision-making in translation, within a comprehensive framework of Relevance Theory, connectionist principles and competence-oriented researches of translation (CORT). It draws on the methodological notion of triangulation of previous researches to locate cognitive patterns related to the inferential behaviour of translators. Sample data from Spanish and Brazilian translators working from English into Spanish and Portuguese are examined, with concurrent use of different data elicitation procedures via *Translog* and retrospective protocols. The performance of novice and expert translators is assessed on the basis of cognitive rhythm, deliberate practice and the relationship between cognitive effort and contextual effect. The tentative outcome of the data analysis appears to support the amalgamation of procedural and conceptual encodings as constitutive instances of inferential processing. It also reveals aspects of a multi-level process mediated by the meta-representation that the translator has of both source and target texts. As a result, the relevance-theoretic approach to translation process seems able to account for how effort and effect may combine in a dynamic synergy to deal with the implicatures and explicatures of source texts and how this combination allows cognitive processing and textual rendering to take shape in different cognitive environments and ultimately in different target texts.