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Metalinguistic awareness in translation: a cognitive linguistic view

Translation has been referred to as 'a metalinguistic skill, *par excellence'*, and what makes it so is claimed to be 'the necessity to reflect on language and language use across two languages' (Malakoff and Hakuta 1991:150). There are a number of definitions of metalinguistic awareness, but for the purposes of this discussion, the following starting point is adopted:

> … metalinguistic awareness may be defined as awareness of the underlying linguistic nature of language use. Metalinguistic awareness allows the individual to step back from the comprehension or production of an utterance in order to consider the linguistic form and structure underlying the meaning of the utterance' (Malakoff and Hakuta 1991: 147)

Despite its centrality for translation, the concepts of metalinguistic awareness, or knowledge, or ability have figured predominantly within the fields of Bilingualism or Second Language Acquisition, and not within Translation Studies (TS) itself. This remains the case even in the recent emergence of Translation Process Research (TPR), a research paradigm that aims to investigate cognitive aspects of the translation process, an area where one might expect a certain amount of interest in this issue. Linguistic theories are underrepresented in this research (with the exception of work by Rojo, e.g. 2015), leading to certain lacunae in the research landscape.

This paper will address one such lacuna, the issue of how metalinguistic knowledge and abilities are used and developed in and through translation. It will be suggested that a cognitive linguistic approach could lead to interesting insights both into the translation task as such and into the development of translational abilities.

The paper is organized as follows: following the introductory comments, the view from Translation Studies will be presented. A brief account is given of TS constructs which adopt implicit notions of metalinguistic knowledge. This overview will also illustrate operationalizations of these notions in empirical work. It will be suggested that a cognitive linguistic approach to metalinguistic knowledge and use is an appropriate way forward to theoretical enrichment for TS. From there, we will consider the integration of metalinguistic knowledge in Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008; Roehr 2008), and an attempt will be made to identify a cognitive linguistic approach that is relevant for the investigation of translation processes and products. A necessary element of the entire discussion is the development of translation skill and its evolution over time. This must be accounted for using the same broad cognitive processes as are otherwise implied in language learning and use, e.g. association, automatization, schematization, and categorization (Langacker 2008: 16-18).

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