

Implicit theories and the translation process: A research project with non-expert translators

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Models of translation expertise assume that, when at task, translators apply a repertoire of behaviors and strategies, and also knowledge about their working languages, text topics, and the way the world works, including specific theoretical and even scientific notions about translation and translating. On the other hand, descriptions of non-expert translators' behaviour usually portray them as just using translation procedures incidentally acquired when learning a second language. Thus, descriptions of non-expert translators' behaviour tend to focus mainly on their procedural knowledge, and they do not often take into account their translation-related notions. However, both empirical translation process research and experience accumulated through translation teaching suggest that, when translating, non-expert translators indeed apply theoretical knowledge and beliefs about translation that can be identified as implicit theories. An implicit theory can be defined as a set of knowledge and beliefs that individuals apply to interpret experience, to plan action and to predict the behaviour and properties of people and objects. Implicit theories have been shown to play an important role in guiding action. In a previous study, we analyzed the implicit theories of a group of students by means of the conceptual theory of metaphor. We are currently analyzing log data of a set of translation tasks by the same informants. The overall goals of our research are:

1. To identify correlations between implicit theories about translation and translation patterns in nonexpert translators.
2. To develop and test hypotheses about the influence of implicit theories onto observable behaviour.
3. To test the possibility of modifying implicit theories of translation through reflexive instruction and to check if behavioural changes can be achieved as a consequence of this instruction.

In this paper, we will present the main results of both studies and discuss the methods we have developed and applied.

