

Risk Management by Trainee Translators: a study of translation procedures and justifications in peer-group interaction

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes trainee translators' risk management while translating in a simulated setting that involves translator-client relations. The research aims are: (a) to explore how the use of peer-group interaction in a simulated setting affects students' ways of managing risk during translation, and (b) to study whether translators have any identifiable behavior pattern of risk management and effort distribution.

A two-cycle experiment involving two roles, the translator and the simulated client, was carried out with a class of translation students to test the effects of the main variable of peer-group interaction. Additional data were collected through pre-and-post-experiment questionnaires and interviews with student subjects. The research analyzes the translators' rendition processes, codes the problems they faced, observes the translation procedures they considered and finally adopted, and looks into the justifications for their procedures, in order to interpret their risk management.

Translator subjects encounter three kinds of problems: source-text (ST) comprehension, creation of appropriate target-text (TT) effects, and other problems. They adopt procedures to handle these problems. I have adapted the translation procedure model proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995: 31), originally used for French-English comparison, to study the translation performances of the subjects, most of whom are Chinese. Adjustments are made to the definitions of the seven classical procedures. Also, I refer to the data on the translation process as well as translation products, and devise a list of procedures used by translators. This is a bottom-up approach, whereas almost all previous procedure models in translator training have been top-down.

Working from Englund Dimitrova's (2005) "evaluation" model and Pavlović's (2010) "argument" model, I detect a list of justifications, observe the translator subjects' discourse, and look into the way they justify decisions.

A total of 10 translator profiles are generated from the project. The profiles consist of several parts: (a) the translator's risk management, (b) the translator's work style, (c) the translator in the presentation session, (d) the translator before and after the experiment, and (e) the translator's background.

The qualitative and quantitative results of this study have some implications for translator training: (a) the experience of being a client seems to reinforce the translator's risk aversion; (b) simulated interaction seems to promote the translators' dedication of extra effort to important problems; (c) there is a wide gap between the translator's internal risk management

and their external presentation of risk; and (d) the use of role-playing simulation can empower students' learning by enhancing their attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence, interpersonal competence and strategic competence.

KEYWORDS: peer-group interaction, risk management, role-playing simulation, translation justifications, translation procedures, translator-client relations, translator's effort allocation, translator training.

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