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Introduction to Thematic Section: Processes in Text Production – Approaches and Methods

Introduction

The first online edition of *Hermes* (*Hermes* no 44) presents a thematic section on processes in text production. Text production is defined as the set of acts realized by one or more persons with the aim of producing a text. Under the title “Processes in Text Production – Approaches and Methods”, we strive to contribute to broaden and deepen the general research development of what goes on from the moment that a text-production task is conceived until the final text product is reached: text-production processes. Processes are generally classified as either internal (mental) or external (physical).

In recent years, both methodology and empirical focus have changed considerably. This change of focus is mainly due to technological advances, which have provided researchers with the means both to unveil more aspects of text-production processes and to make more fine-grained studies of the processes. The last couple of decades saw the introduction of new software tools such as for example eye tracking, logging and screen capture. Each of these tools makes it possible to unveil additional aspects of text-production processes. Today these tools are regularly applied in process studies with various purposes and are constantly developed. Also the empirical focus has changed. Where knowledge of processes traditionally was gained by studying the text product, data have nowadays extended to also covering for example workflow, cognitive decision-making and work place situations.

A number of recognized researchers in the area of writing and translation-process research have contributed to the section. Each contribution presents an interesting perspective on internal/external processes, methods and approaches. The first two contributions study merely the external processes, whereas the following two study the internal processes. The last contribution is an account of the state of the art of process research in the very specific area of translation-memory systems.

In the first contribution, “Options and Requirements. A Study of the External Process of Specialized Document Production”, **Leona Van Vaerenbergh** and **Klaus Schubert** present a model of the mental process of specialized document production in the field of patient information leaflet (PIL) production. The model is defined as a process of decision-making steered by controlling influences which originate in external processes. They found their study on four dimensions: technical content, linguistic form, technical medium and work processes and on four agents: initiator(s), recipients, team and informants. On the basis of an empirical analysis of the production process of PILs, the authors elaborate on the interrelation of task, agents and controlling influences during production. With their analysis they show in which way external processes impact, control and influence internal processes and postulate that the controlling influences affect the decision space and decision criteria of the individual.

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In the second contribution, “Investigating Real Work Situations in Translation Agencies. Work Content and Its Components”, **Anna Kuznik** and **Joan Miquel Verd** outline a study on activities carried out in a translation agency in Poland. The study is interdisciplinary in nature as it is based on knowledge from the sociology of work and translation studies.

With a view to finding out what kind of activities people working in translation agencies carry out, and, more specifically, how translation activities fit into these activities, Kuznik and Verd re-interpret data from a study carried out by Marta Stelmach in a small translation agency in Poland. This study provided a quantitative analysis of all activities carried out in the translation agency, but did not analyze the components of work content and how translation activities are organized. It is this gap that Kuznik and Verd’s analysis aims at filling out. The results of their study show among others that outsourcing plays an important role in the way work is organized in this agency and has positive effects with respect to flexibility and adaption to tight deadlines.

In the third contribution, “Pauses Reflecting the Processing of Syntactic Units in Monolingual Text Production and Translation”, **Sini Immonen** and **Jukka Mäkisalo** explore the relation between translation and other types of writing processes on the basis of the influence of syntactic units on pause length. In this study, key-stroke logging protocols of 18 professional translators, producing a text in Finnish and a translation from English into Finnish, are analyzed and categorized. The findings show the differences between monolingual text production and translation, especially in relation to pauses preceding subordinate and main clauses and phrase initial pauses with both types of producers.

In the fourth contribution, “What Were They Thinking?! Students’ Decision Making in L1 and L2 Translation Processes”, **Nataša Pavlović** studies the internal processes of novice translators. Her study is based on the assumption that subjects use similar arguments for the decisions made, regardless whether they work into their first language or into the foreign language, but that the distribution of arguments differs. To test this assumption, she sets up an experiment of collaborative work between three Croatian students of English who were to translate two source texts, one from Croatian into English and one in the other direction. The sessions were audio and videotaped so that they could be used as data. The results of the data showed that the same kind of arguments was used in both directions, but that their distribution was not as different as hypothesised.

In the fifth contribution, “Translation-Memory (TM) Research: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?”, **Tina Paulsen Christensen** and **Anne Schjoldager** study the way computer-aided translations are carried out. Within the last decades, translators’ work has undergone a radical change due to the advent of translation-memory (TM) systems. In spite of this change, research into the applications and implications of working with TM is not yet systematic. On the basis of a selection of nine representative studies on TM, Christensen and Schjoldager provide an overview of what kind of knowledge recent research has unveiled about TM. Christensen and Schjoldager conclude that each of these studies gives a fragment of knowledge, but more systematic knowledge is needed in order to provide a more general and fine-grained picture of the way translators work with TM and how it influences their cognitive processes.

From the collection of articles it becomes obvious that there is a number of overlaps both in research methods and research approaches of the two fields. We are optimistic that with this Hermes thematic section we are able to raise further interest into the field of text-production process research and we hope to inspire future research at the overlap between the two fields and into the way in which they can start to mutually support and inspire each other.