

Conceptual blending and translation equivalence: Cognitive Linguistics meets Translation Studies

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Translation theories, which have proliferated over the past few decades (cf. Venuti 2012), generally suffer from theoretical eclecticism and, in consequence, appear to fail to provide satisfying answers to many questions fundamental to any theory of translation, one of them being the recurring problem of translation equivalence.

As claimed by Tabakowska (1993), Cognitive Linguistics, being a relatively new linguistic paradigm, can nevertheless make a valuable contribution to Translation Studies by bringing into focus the semantic character of grammar and thus replacing algorithmic rules of the translation process with pragmatically conditioned principles. Within Cognitive Linguistics lexical items are held to be representations of cognitive categories based on human experiences of the world and are stored in human mind as mental concepts, while meaning is constructed through our interaction with the external world and is equated with conceptualisation (Langacker 2008).

Viewed from this perspective, the translation process should be seen as a cognitive discourse-pragmatic phenomenon involving the transfer of cognitive categories in both the interlingual and intercultural dimensions. The process certainly does not constitute a simple code-switching between two languages as was suggested by traditional translation theories established within the structural linguistic paradigm. Further, since the cognitive resources giving rise to similar meanings in distinct languages may be quite different due to the fact that distinct languages have developed different ways of prompting the required cognitive construction, the translation process involves, as Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010) argues, the *re-conceptualization* of a source language message into a target language message, whereby the conceptualisations in both the source and target language must be equivalent for the translation to be recognised as successful.

In particular, it seems that one cannot satisfactorily account for the establishing of the equivalence of the conceptualisations referred to unless recourse is made to (i) Fauconnier & Turner's (2002) *conceptual blending*, a fundamental cognitive mechanism playing a crucial role in structuring of conceptual knowledge and inferential processes and (ii) communicative relevance and discourse context as discussed in Brandt & Brandt's (2005) revised model of conceptual blending, are incorporated into the analysis of translation processes. With this in mind, the paper examines, using the modified, translation-oriented *Conceptual Blending Theory*, a number of translated pairs from authentic corpus data (hard science fiction novels and short stories translated from English into Polish and vice versa) to identify the construal shifts performed by the translators in the target texts as compared with the source text conceptualisations.

References

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