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Darwish, Ali (2008). *Optimality in Translation*. Melbourne: Writescop Pty Ltd. 318, pp. ISBN 097574192 6.

O*ptimality in Translation* (2008) results from Ali Darwish's doctoral research undertaken at Deakin University, Australia, from 1993 to 1998. With a view towards developing a model for optimising translation assessment, the book is organised into seven theoretical overviews exploring state-of-the-art of communication, decision making and translation, and one chapter on an empirical analysis of the internal processes of translating under uncertain conditions. This empirical analysis is carried out through the analysis of think-aloud protocols (TAPs) produced by six translators translating texts from English into their native language, Arabic.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the book suggesting that it will attempt to test 'the hypothesis that translation is a decision making process under constraints within an optimality theoretical framework' (17). Those constraints stem from four conditions: certainty, uncertainty, conflict and risk. Darwish pertains his discussions to translation decision making under uncertainty because it 'seems to offer a fertile ground for observing and analyzing translation decision making since both aspects of the cognitive process, comprehension and production hinge on the extent of certainty of information required to produce a piece of translation' (19).

In chapter 2, the author sets out his research problem signposting that his move from the notion of translatability as something solely textual, thus, external to the translator, to the internal processes of decision making. The scope of his investigation relies on 'written inter-lingual transfer of information' (28), hence leaving aside questions of oral interpreting.

Chapter 3 offers a comprehensive literature review on translation decision making. Here Darwish demonstrates that decision making has been applied to translation studies as a derivation from other disciplines, such as cognitive psychology and communication, emphasising that none of them have given 'the translation phenomenon the centrality it deserves' (43-4). His literature review also encompasses the application of Think-Aloud Protocols (TAPs) in translation studies, a derivation from the study of second language acquisition.

In chapter 4, the author goes back to decision making and explores its major theories and models as well as attempting to define basic concepts which take part in translation decision making, such as decision and culture. Chapter 4 provides a wide range of decision making terminology which, problematically, is not applied nor referred back to in further chapters, especially when it comes to the core problem of this research.

Chapter 5 tackles theories and models of communication including translation-mediated communication. In examining problems derived from

interlingual communication, he argues that, in this book, translation is seen as 'a means of removing these interlingual barriers to communication and as a way of solving a communication problem' (111). Therefore, translation is considered here a 'problem-solving process' (98) that goes through a wide range of decisions that will eventually bring communication to fruition.

Chapter 6 suggests a framework for a generic translation model based on the notion of 'optimal approximation'. In bringing to the fore debatable notions of equivalence in translation, the author confronts Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Darwish argues that any language is capable of solving problems that stem from source language specificities, as, for example, lack of time description in the Hopi language. The author defends that differently from views on language determinism, language evolves and may even accommodate different worldviews by means of translation, in which variations on descriptions of the perception of reality may begin with epithets and adjectives. In striving to develop a generic translation model based on optimal translation, he defines optimally approximated translation as 'translation that has a parallel but not similar function to that of the source language function. It is juxtapositional translation in that it occupies a source-text referential place in the target language' (127). Darwish also clarifies the overlapping use of 'process' and 'procedure' in translation literature signalling that the former refers to the translator's cognitive processes, whereas the latter refers to 'activities that yield a finished translation product' (139). Darwish simply divides 'translation process' into 'internal' and 'external'.

In order to 'set the scene' for a discussion on translation decisions, chapter 7 explores translation types, from source language typology, target language typology, to translation production-based typology. It also envelopes discussions on the definition of 'text' and its layers, as well as the multiple layers present in the process of translating, which culminates in a model of translating, from its earliest stage, that encompasses the translator's first visual contact with the text, to the actual production of its translated version.

Chapter 8 investigates the cognitive strategies used by translators under the condition of uncertainty. In spite of the drawbacks of TAPs in this type of experiment, namely a potential reduction of naturalness and spontaneity in the process, Darwish demonstrates the efficacy of the application of TAPs in an experiment carried out with six professional translators. He observes that the TAPs revealed 'a dynamic relationship between the level of uncertainty and the efficiency of the translation decision-making process' and 'evidence of incoherence, imprecision, inaccuracy and inconsistent register' (281).

Even though the author very clearly sets out his research problem and how he plans to reach his objectives, he over-extends his theoretical

discussion on concepts and terminology that prove to distract the reader from the main objective of the book. He does not explore his results as deeply as he explores the literature review of theories related to decision-making process.

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