

Self-revision under time pressure

Serafima Khalzanova

Universitat Rovira i Virgili

The study of time pressure is important not only because it sheds light on the translation process in general. Nowadays, practical issues like the hotly-debated way of pricing translation, especially in localization, and the growing demands for speed have made some new questions arise. These are connected with productivity and quality, stimulating research on time constraints (Jensen 2001, De Rooze 2003) and investigations into productivity associated with various values of fuzzy matches (Guerberof 2007).

The research related to time in translation has led to some surprising findings: it seems that in many cases there is no direct correlation between the quality of the output and the time spent on preparing the final draft. This is true both for translation (Lorenzo 2002, De Rooze 2003) and for other-revision (Künzli 2007) and contradicts the idea that translators should try to improve the TT as much as possible.

On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that one of the main differences between novices and professionals lies in the way they revise their translations, professionals making fewer corrections, especially during the post-drafting phase (Jakobsen 2002, Englund Dimitrova 2005).

However, as far as we know, no attempt has been taken to describe qualitatively different kinds of corrections made with and without time constraints. The classifications of corrections in view of their contribution to the final draft as justified, unnecessary, changes that introduce errors, etc (Arthern 1983, Künzli 2007) apply to other-revision. We believe that it is time to study self-revision both quantitatively and qualitatively, which might give us better insight into the process and explain why translations made under time pressure often turn out to be graded higher than those made without it.

The principal innovation in our research is that all the changes are singled out manually, and not just calculated on the basis of the number of key-strokes, which allowed us to assess them qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Apart from comparing the number of on-line and off-line corrections, we identify typos and so-called “circular” changes. We classify as “circular” the changes the first variant of which appears in the final draft (“after” → “following” → “after”). These changes are indicative of the effort and time that could have been saved.

The tentative hypothesis proposed on the basis of this study is that corrections made under time pressure differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from those made without it, and in some cases this difference results in higher quality. More experimenting is needed in order to describe the factors making some translators adapt better to working under time pressure.

The present study, based on translations of two short texts from English into Brazilian Portuguese by a group of six translators, forms a small part of a future thesis, having as the ultimate aim the description of various translation styles and their robustness against time pressure with a possibility to develop guidelines for better practice.