

Faculty of Humanities

Distinguished Lecture Series

Translation process research: methodology and epistemology

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Translation process research (TPR) has evolved in four stages, each stage being associated with a dominant methodology with an underlying epistemology. Pioneers in the 1980s employed the Think Aloud Protocol (TAP) method (Kriings, 1986). The epistemological assumption underlying TAP methodology was that by asking a person to 'think aloud' while performing a task, the thoughts spoken aloud would produce verbal data giving a researcher access to and knowledge about the person's cognitive processes (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, 1984). The second stage, beginning around the middle of the 1990s, was characterised by keystroke logging (Jakobsen 2017). The underlying assumption here was that the behavioural process of typing on a keyboard correlates with mental processes; particularly that pauses in the typing index cognitive effort. Computers made it possible to record keystrokes in time with great accuracy and certainty, which made it possible to measure delays and calculate correlations. Despite this more positivist and technology-dependent methodology, the aim was to gain knowledge of cognitive processes from analysis of the recorded and measured data – possibly through triangulation with interpreted TAP data. This was also the aim when eye tracking was added in the third stage of TPR from around 2005. Eye tracking technology made it possible to study gaze scientifically as evidence of cognitive phenomena like attention, attention shift, attention duration and more broadly of comprehension and text production and monitoring activity (Hvelplund 2014).

Where TAPs generally originated in classroom settings, research moved more and more into the lab with keystroke and eye tracking methods. The fourth stage has involved a call for TPR to move out of the lab and into the reality of the technology-dominated translation workplace. This has necessitated a shift of methodology to anthropological, observational and interpretative methods more suitable for field work study (Ehrensberger-Dow 2015, Muñoz 2016). With the shift in methodology and location comes a strong focus on the dependence of human cognition on brain, body, environment, situation and technology. The extent to which this has led to a new epistemology of TPR, possibly a new understanding of translation pointing to the emergence of a fifth TPR stage will be discussed in conclusion.

- Prof. Arnt Lykke Jakobsen is professor of translation and translation technology at Copenhagen Business School (CBS). From 1990-1994
- he headed a major research project on 'Translating Specific-Purpose-Language Texts'. A growing interest in translation processes and
- methods of exploring them led to his invention of the keylog software program Translog, the first version of which was developed in 1995.
- Subsequent versions of the program have been a key technology in a
- wide range of experiments, including two major EU research projects, the Eye-to-IT project (2006-2009) and the CASMACAT project (2011-2014). In 2005 he established CRITT, the CBS Centre for
- research and innovation in translation and translation technology, which he directed until 2014. He was CETRA Chair Professor in
- 2014 and has been the president of European Society for Translation Studies since 2016.