

Translators' Personal Metaphors: An Exploratory Study of Distributed Selves

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The socio-technical networks of the post-modern era (Lamb et al., 2000) have brought about a multiplicity of dynamic selves which inevitably expand and distribute (Bruner, 2001) beyond the individual (Gilbert & Forney, 2013). This distillation could be conceived of as an adjusting mechanism adopted by the translating agent to face the novelties and uncertainties encountered in a profit-maximizing context (Carbonell et al., 2014; Hatano & Inagaki, 1986). Being bound to continuously internalize the networked systems of such a context (Farahzad & Varmazyari, 2018; Meylaerts, 2010; Moser, 2007), translators, as professionals, need to be adaptive too (Shreve, 2020). This can result in coexisting plural (Baumeister, 1998) and sometimes contradicting selves (Higgins, 1987), constantly evolving through experience.

As an abstract entity, the self tends to be shaped through the interaction with objects and places (Dittmar, 1992). Therefore, the symbolization of the self is intrinsically metaphorical. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, a cornerstone of Cognitive Linguistics, metaphor relates the abstract to the concrete (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Kövecses, 2015), enables self-reflection and communication of the inner self (Ortony, 1993), and could unravel the topology of translators' metaphorical self-concepts.

An exploratory study was conducted on a corpus of 50 blogs and podcasts in which metaphors were identified (Cameron & Deignam, 2006) and arranged in profession-oriented (stakeholder/peer-oriented) and practice-oriented (readership-oriented; material/technology-based). The analysis revealed 59 personal metaphors (Sharpe, 1940) in which multiple selves coexist: the translator's ideal-self, as a "genius-like inventor" (Morgner, 2020, p. 143), operates in an idyllic place of cooperation with the stakeholders or receivers (e.g. A TRANSLATOR IS A SOCIAL DANCER), and is constantly brought back to earth by the objectified, impersonal working-self, conceptualized as a mere information transmitter (e.g. A TRANSLATOR IS A DATA SPLITTER). These findings therefore open new lines of empirical research that can relate coexisting multiple selves and adaptive expertise (Baroody, 2003).

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