

CONFERENCE
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On the effects of the verbalisation of the Dialogue Interpreter's inferences:
from local relevance to global discursive coherence

Abstract

This paper aims to deepen the understanding of the negotiation of meaning between participants in an interpreted bilingual interaction, i.e. between two primary speakers (PPs) and the interpreter, by focusing on the effects of the verbalisation of the interpreter's mental representations (inferences). To do so, we use the conceptual tools of Sperber and Wilson's Theory of Relevance (1986), combined with those of Grosz and Sidner's Theory of Discourse Structure (1986). We apply this analytical apparatus to excerpts of authentic Russian-French psychotherapeutic interactions.

We observe that at the level of the utterances, the verbalisation of the interpreter's inference specifies what is perceived by her as the original discourse segment intention. Through this discursive action, the interpreter co-creates a shared cognitive environment between the participants, which reduces the receiver's cognitive efforts to process the rendition. From the discursive point of view, we would say that the verbalisation of the inference is locally relevant.

Moreover, the verbalisation of inferences can strengthen the global discursive coherence of the exchange, when

- the interpreter makes links between discourse segment intentions, as she has perceived them, more manifest, thus underpinning the speaker's discourse global intention;
- the interpreter produces a rendition that transmits the speaker's perceived intention while integrating the receiver's (argumentative) position, thus reinforcing the inter-discursive coherence between the PPs.

In other words, the verbalisation of inferences could therefore be some tangible trace of the interpreter's cooperative stance in the process of meaning negotiation between the interactors, as it reduces the receiver's cognitive efforts, enhances mutual understanding between PPs and supports PPs' collaborative efforts to communicate.

This analysis of the cognitive processes at work in the excerpts tends to show that what has so far been treated as the interpreter's "additions" or "expanded renditions" enables the latter to exercise cooperative coordination of interaction, and could therefore be more precisely called "collaborative renditions".