

EST Congress 2016 – Panel

Title of panel	Ergonomics of translation: methodological, practical and educational implications
Name(s) of convener(s)	Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow ¹ Riitta Jääskeläinen ²
Affiliation	¹ Zurich University of Applied Sciences ² University of Eastern Finland
Email address	¹ ehre@zhaw.ch ² riitta.jaaskelainen@uef.fi

According to the International Ergonomics Association (IEA)¹, ergonomics is concerned with “physical, cognitive, social, organizational, environmental and other relevant factors” of human work and the promotion of conditions that are “compatible with the needs, abilities and limitations of people”. For translation, the physical factors include the furniture and equipment that translators use and their suitability for the extended periods they spend sitting in the same position. Cognitive factors include the demands placed by source texts that can differ with respect to quality, subject matter, and terminological, conceptual and linguistic complexity. Human-computer interactions, information sources, and language technology are also all factors related to the cognitive ergonomics of a translator’s workplace. Social factors include collaboration and exchanges among translators as well as interactions between other agents in the chain of target text production, such as project managers and revisors. Since translation can be regarded as a complex system involving many agents, organizational factors such as workflow, communication processes, project management, job security, and translator status also influence this type of work. Environmental factors in the physical sense (e.g. lighting, temperature, air quality, space) as well in the broader sense of the role of translation and translators in the economy and society as a whole can also influence how this situated activity is carried out.

In the past few years, the boundaries of translation studies have shifted to include research into the realities of the translation workplace. Constraints inherent to being part of a system and the resultant effects on translators’ decision-making have become the focus of interest by translation studies researchers with different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches (e.g. Désilets et al. 2009; Ehrensberger-Dow 2014; Koskinen 2008; Kuznik and Verd 2010; LeBlanc 2013; Marshman 2014; Risku 2014). Viewing translation from an ergonomic perspective can provide an appropriate framework to understand the impact of various factors on the demanding bilingual activity of translation (cf. Lavault-Olléon 2011). When translators are doing work that requires their close attention and concentration, they have to exert energy and ultimately cognitive resources to compensate for the distraction of any physical discomfort or frustration with organizational problems. The potential for poor physical, cognitive, and organizational ergonomics to have detrimental effects on translation quality and translators’ job satisfaction seems obvious.

¹ <http://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>

This panel will focus on the methodological, practical and educational implications of taking the ergonomics of translation seriously. Contributions that consider how working conditions and changes in the working environment are affecting translators and translation performance are very welcome. In particular, we would like to consider how a better understanding of workplace conditions can inform teaching in undergraduate, graduate, and/or continuing professional development programs.

Contributions to the panel on any of the following topics would fit with the panel theme:

- ergonomics and the situated activity of translation
- ergonomics and 4EA cognition (embedded, embodied, extended, enacted, affective)
- ergonomic issues at professional translators' workplace
- impact of ergonomic factors on translation practices and processes
- impact of ergonomic factors on decision-making and translation quality
- physiological and psychological issues related to poor ergonomics
- poor ergonomics as a mitigating factor in creativity
- ergonomic issues related to language technologies
- ergonomic issues associated with socio-technical innovations
- incorporating ergonomic perspectives in translator training

References

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- Kuznik, Anna, and Joan M. Verd. 2010. Investigating Real Work Situations in Translation Agencies. Work Content and its Components. *Hermes* 44: 25-43.
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