

Translation Ecosystems: From Constraints to Affordances

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Abstract

This article provides a thorough review of constraints in translation studies. It analyzes existing literature to assess whether constraints positively or negatively impact translators. Drawing on studies of translation constraints, it proposes an ecosystemic perspective, viewing constraints as transversal elements within translation ecosystems that manifest differently according to given environments and organisms. We propose an abstracted constraint prioritization procedure aimed at harnessing affordance perception, a skill that learners, scholars, and practitioners might find beneficial. The article concludes by providing an ecosystemic map of these forces, and it brings to the surface the importance of establishing clear vantage points to create ecologically valid abstractions, underscoring that constraints lead translators to perceive affordances. This ecological and affordance-based perspective aims to enable learners and practitioners to better incorporate the “constraint concept” in their work and connect the scholarly and professional communities. One such area of connection is translator’s posture, centered on how translators occupy a position in the environments forming their domains of practice, be they textual, professional, or social.

Keywords

Translation constraints, ecosystem, affordances, prioritization,
translator’s posture

摘要

本論文全面綜述了翻譯研究的約束概念。研究回顧了專述翻譯約束的現有文獻，討論約束是正面地還是負面地影響著譯者。論文建基於專述翻譯約束的研究，提出翻譯生態系的觀點，並將約束視為橫跨翻譯生態系的元素，會依據特定環境和有機生命，而有不同的表述方式。論者概要提出了一套規程，為約束制度優先權重，規程旨在幫助譯者掌握可供性的線索，可能是裨益學生、學者和從業人員的技能。論文最後擬定了一副翻譯生態系藍圖，枚舉翻譯工作的約束因素。藍圖表明，建立明確的觀點，和創造有效的生態系概念是相當重要，強調了約束能夠引導譯者有更好覺察和可供性。論文提出以生態和可供性為基礎的觀點，旨在學生和從業人員能更好把「約束觀念」融入翻譯工作，連接學界和業界。學界和業界能連接的一個領域便是譯者的處理方式，無論是文本、專業還是社會的實踐領域，都以譯者如何在構成自其實踐領域的環境中佔一席之地為中心。

關鍵詞

翻譯約束、生態系、可供性、制度優先權重、譯者姿態

1. Introduction

Kate Briggs (2005) argues that translation can be seen as a form of constrained writing. This affirmation, repeated several times in her thesis, finds justification in the constructs of numerous theorists coming at the practice of translation from a wide range of disciplinary angles. Yet, for all the discussion of constraints, there exists no specific entry for *translation constraint* in any translation handbook, encyclopedia, reader, or companion. Nor indeed is there any in industry standards like the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 2015), its Amendment 1 update (2017), or the recently issued ISO (2024b).

Any text that is officially recognized as a translation in a socio-cultural system necessarily (covert and pseudo-translations excluded) must refer to and transfer the contents of a clearly established source text (ST). These basic conditions, known in the academic community as the ST, transfer, and relationship postulates (Toury 1995), limit