



UNINT

Università

degli Studi Internazionali di Roma

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Relevance Theory-informed approaches to translation and interpreting: Training and practice

1. *Intro: RT & T&I*
2. *RT in context (1): Theoretical implications*
3. *RT in context (2): Practical applications*
4. *Conclusions: Future avenues?*

➤ *ARTTI conference, 9-10 February 2023*



1. Introduction: RT & T&I

1. If a situation calls for the assistance of a *qualified and competent* interpreter or translator > ask how we define 'qualified' and 'competent'.
 2. Also, we might seek to explain precisely how T&I *work*.
- **Last three decades:** interest in:
 1. product of T&I
 2. cognitive aspects of these processes
 - **RT (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995)**
 - *only theoretical framework* in the area of cognitive pragmatics that has been adopted to capture the complexity of translator- or interpreter-mediated communication



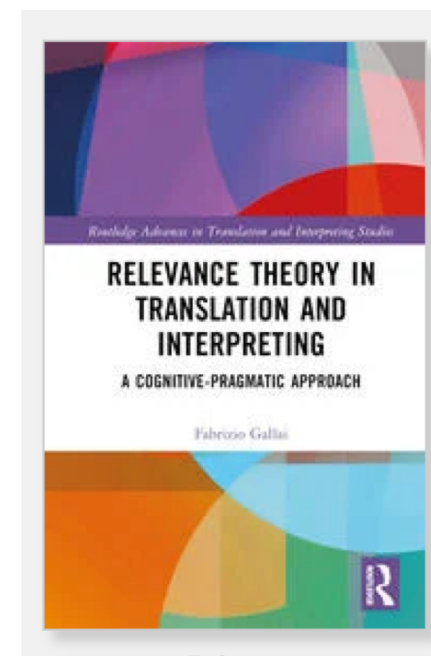
RT: increasing popularity in T&I

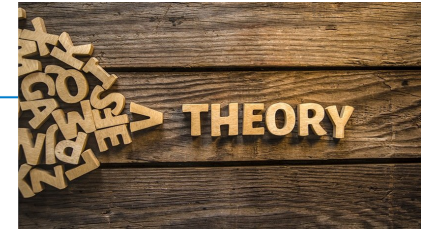
- the work of professionals in T&I is underpinned by **linguistic and cognitive** abilities
 - an appropriate pragmatic framework for capturing these communicative acts must relate these activities to the **mental** processes
- However, RT has sometimes also been **misapplied**:
 - presented as a training method to 'correctly' derive the intended message;
 - analysis fails to consider the special situation of mediated events.

My volume (Taylor & Francis)

“Relevance Theory in Translation and Interpreting: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Approach”

- *First attempt - since Gutt's (1991/2000) Cognition and Context - to illustrate the **explanatory potential** of RT in providing a cognitively based account of T&I, and 'getting closer' to communicators' intentions*
- *Includes **insights** into Gricean and RT pragmatics, many practical illustrative **examples**, as well as a list of recommended reading, questions, and exercises*

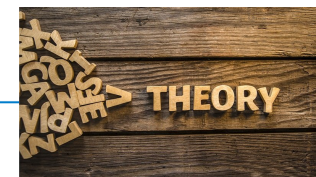




2. RT IN CONTEXT: *Theoretical applications*

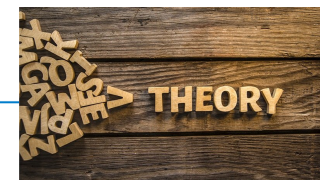
Significance of RT in T&I studies:

1. plausible account of the dynamic nature of human communication, including T&I processes
 - individual differences among communicator and audience may cause the complexity of contexts that are established 'online' rather than 'a priori' (Alves and Gonçalves 2003, 6)
2. cause-effect framework of cognitive efforts
 - helps to “predict communication problems when the audience lacks ready access to certain pieces of information which are needed for consistency with the principle of relevance” (Gutt 2000, 164)
3. advocates the economical use of cognitive efforts to achieve the best communicative effect
 - important inspiration to solve the conflicts between limited cognitive processing capacity and cognitive overload in the interpreting process



Gutt's (1991/2000) *approach*

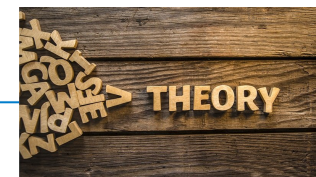
- ✓ translation falls within the domain of communication
- ✓ TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER mediates between the intentions and evidences of the ST and the TT, which is an *ostensive stimulus defined as a case of interlingual interpretive use*
- achieve relevance by communicating the SC's intentions to a TA
- STUDY of the process of translation should focus *“on the comparison of interpretations, not on the reproduction of words, linguistic constructions or textual features”* (Gutt 1991/2000, 233)



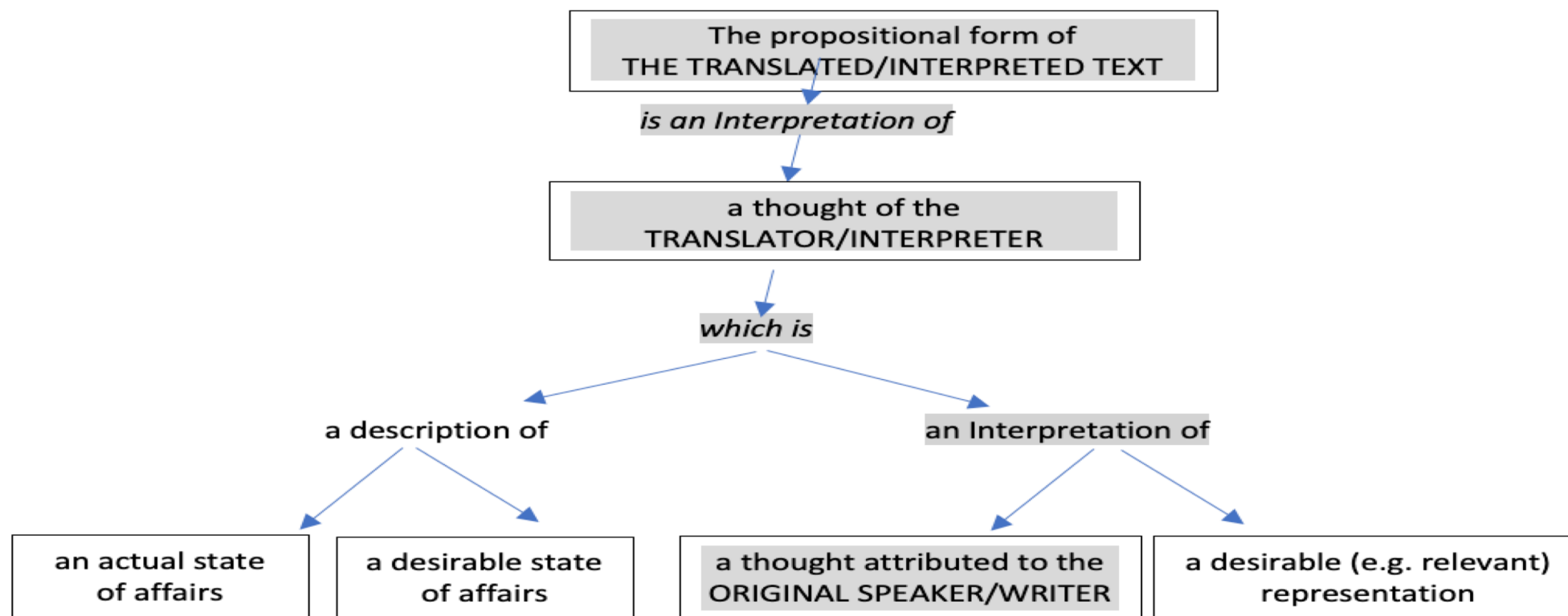
Ostensive communication by translation

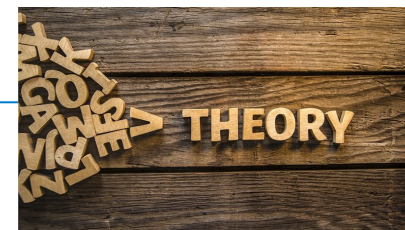
- Depends on the *interplay* between:
 1. psychological context or “*cognitive environment*” of an utt.
 2. *processing effort* required to derive contextual effects
- involves establishing a *chain of resemblance* relations between a set of Interpretations
 - starts with the intended Interpretaton of the ST and ends with the assessment of (the evidence for) the Interpretation arrived at by the TT reader
- to ensure *interpretive resemblance*, translators make use of metacognitive activities through monitoring processes





Gutt: Interpretive use of language



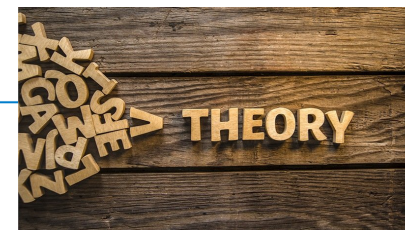


Translator's task

- ❖ According to Gutt, the principal aim of a translator is to achieve optimal relevance:

“to understand at each point what contextual effects were inferred in the original context and thereby form a comprehensive hypothesis of the intended interpretation of the original, consisting of both explicatures and implicatures”

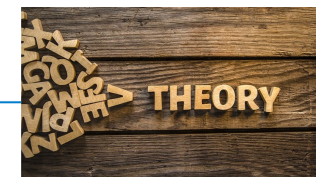
(Gutt 1991/2000, 233)



Faithfulness in translation

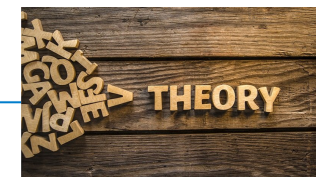
“A matter of yielding the intended Interpretation of the ST through adequate contextual effects that avoid unnecessary processing effort” (Gutt 1991/2000, 101-2)

- The **degree** to which the Interpretation resembles the ST - and the means of expressing that Interpretation - are determined by their **relevance** in the receiving situation
 - their accessibility and ease of processing for the TA



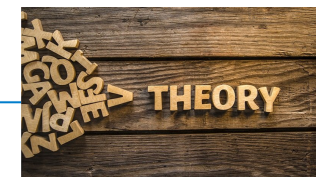
Modelling translators' competence

- High level of **metarepresentational skills** required to manage different Interpretations and cognitive environments
- Gutt: human beings have the exceptional “ability to tell in one language what was first told in another language” (Gutt 1991/2000, 205)
 - **defends a competence-oriented research of translation (CORT)** that
“seeks to understand translation through understanding the communicative competence that makes it possible, for both the translator and his/her audience”
(Gutt 1991/2000, 205)



Lecacy of Gutt's RT approach: Translation

- Over the past 3 decades, it has been integrated into **experimental translation process research**
- Aspects of Gutt's model have now been validated **empirically**, for instance:
 1. **Gutt's notions**: effort-effect relation (Alves 1995, 2007), pragmatic competence (Alves and Gonçalves 2007), procedural meaning (Grisot and Moeschler, 2014, and Grisot et al. 2016, Alves and Gonçalves 2003), and explication (Englund-Dimitrova 2005) have been key to the empirical investigation of how translators arrive at target products as well as to how audiences respond to the TTs
 2. **Fields of study**: Style and figurative language in literature (Boase-Beier 2006, 2011; Sequeiros 1998, 2002), ads (Sasamoto 2019), Irony, jokes and wordplay (Ruiz Moneva 2001, Yus 2016, Díaz-Pérez 2015), Audiovisual translation (Díaz-Pérez 2021; Bogucki 2020)
 3. **Interdisciplinary methods of analysis**: AVT (Desilla 2009, 2012, 2014 ; Braun 2018), Sci-tech translation (Scarpa 2019), empirical-experimental research using brain-imaging methods (Szpak 2017, Alves et al. 2019), Post-editing machine translation (Carl and Schaeffer 2019)



Legacy of Gutt's RT approach: Interpreting

A. CONFERENCE INTERPRETING in the simultaneous mode

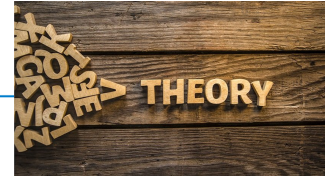
(e.g., Setton 1999, Viaggio 1996, 2002, Vianna 2005, Vandepitte 2001, Gumul 2008, Götz 2017)

B. CONFERENCE INTERPRETING in the consecutive mode

(e.g., Albl-Mikasa 2006, 2007, 2008, 2016, Al-Kharabsheh 2017, Jin 2010, 2011, Sykes 2005)

C. DIALOGUE INTERPRETING (mainly. *legal int. sector*)

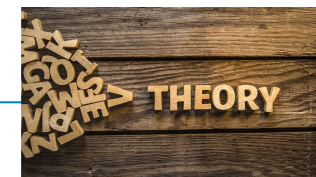
(e.g., Gallai, 2015, 2016, 2017, Mason 2004, 2006a, 2006b, Mišković-Luković and Dedaić 2012, Stroińska and Drzazga 2017)



TRANSLATION VS INTERPRETING

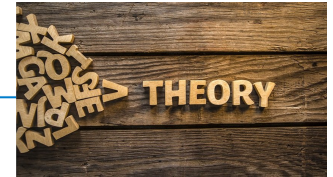
Setton and Dawrant (2016b, 482)

1. **TR**: the intensity of expended cognitive effort is relatively low most of the time, and the feeling of discomfort associated with effort mostly only arises if it is prolonged
 - *emphasis on the translator's decisions and their implications for the positioning of the product within the extremely broad range of what may be deemed translation, as well as its justification in terms of user expectations*
2. **INT**: the intensity can be very high, e.g. when the speaker is fast or speaks with a strong, unfamiliar accent, or when the speech is informationally dense
 - *"these norms and possibilities are more circumscribed, so our focus (especially for interpreter training) must shift to process" (Setton and Dawrant 2016b, 482)*



Methodological issues: Interdisciplinary perspective(s)

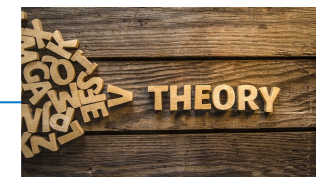
- The communicative context governing language choice and utterance Interpretation will encompass **external** (situational, cultural) factors and **internal** (cognitive) factors – with the latter fully or partly based on the former
- For all practical purposes in T&I, only the **external** factors can be described and modelled with any claim to objectivity and accuracy (at the moment)
- **interdisciplinary outlook** which is a balance between applied pragmatics (RT) and other (macro-ideological, sociological) disciplinary traditions and perspectives
- Multiple points of interface between sociocultural (e.g. Goffman's) and cognitive pragmatic approaches to human communication
- E.g., idea of a *situated* context



Other key vectors of development in terms of methodology

1. move towards triangulation
2. integrating product and process
3. the expansion of the object of study to all participants in communicative events
4. gradual coming together of studies of different modalities, including multimodal presentations (i.e., written text, spoken discourse, audiovisual products)
5. *experimental testing*





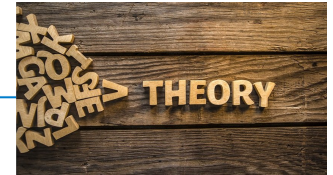
T&I studies: A contribution to experimental pragmatic research

- Experimental work:

1. questionnaire-based work (which often focuses on the intuitions of participants)
2. data from reading and response times
3. more recently, evidence from electroencephalography (EEG), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and the use of eye-tracking technology

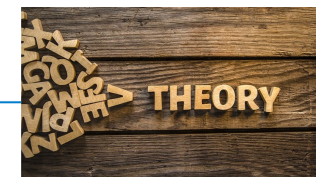
- Other ways of testing and developing ideas:

1. use of data from corpora and other observational work, and
2. applications of the theory in clinical work, developmental pragmatics, language acquisition, first and second language learning and teaching, and stylistics



Alves et al. (2019)

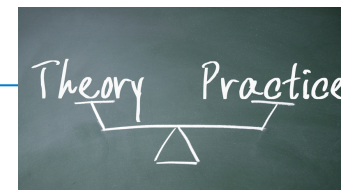
- Draw on *Grice's view of pragmatics, RT, Gutt, and the ToM*
- TRANSLATION processes require “deductions stemming from a cognitive context, from propositions derived from the meaning of the utterance, as well as from inferentially driven processes” (Alves et al. 2019, 131)
- ✓ **Experimental paradigm** - the translator has to infer the speaker's informative intention by relying both on the linguistic signal (i.e., idioms) and the wider discourse and social context in which the utterance serves its communicative purpose.
- ✓ On a neurobiological level, the **inferential nature of translation processing** recruits some of the regions typically involved in tasks involving reasoning about the mental states of others, particularly the **bilateral inferior parietal lobe**



Now that we have *summarised* the theoretical and methodological implications of RT-informed research in T&I...

...Two questions arise:

- *how do we incorporate this theoretical view of T&I skills to be *trained* into a *learning model*?*
- *what would the skill *components, course syllabi, exercises and learning materials* for T&I practitioners and service users involving cross-linguistic RT pragmatics look like?*



3. RT IN CONTEXT: *Practical applications*

1. **Development of meta-, cross-pragmatic competence**

- Gutt's CORT picked up by Alves (2007) and Alves and Gonçalves (2003, 2007)
- key role played by **metarepresentation and metacognition** in the development of competence
- difference between *general* and *specific* translation competence as a teaching tool:
 1. **General TC**: background knowledge, abilities and strategies a successful translator needs to master, and which lead to adequate translation task performance;
 2. **Specific TC**: operates in coordination with other sub-competences, and works mainly through conscious or metacognitive processes, being directly geared to the maximisation of interpretive resemblance.



Other applications to current practitioner and user training and practice

- ❖ *Concept of fidelity: cf. optimal interpretive resemblance*
- ❖ *Ensuring quality - interpretive resemblance plus relevance:* The cognitive effects accessible to the practitioner's listeners will depend on his/her ability to minimise their processing effort.
- ❖ *Implicit and explicit competence*
- ❖ *Role of clues and **procedural meaning***
- ❖ *Cognitive efficiency (cf. cognitive load)*
- ❖ *Monitoring skills*
- ❖ *Ethical implications - empowerment and empathy towards users:* Educators must establish a collection of pedagogical tools that may be used to create an environment in which students can make situated ethical judgments, practice the consequences of such actions, and learn from their experiences

4. *Concluding remarks*

- One of the most challenging issues in all human communication and, in particular, in mediating this communication through T&I, is *the retrieval of hidden, indirect meaning in utterances*
 - RT lends itself to universal application
- Equally adaptable in IS as in TS, RT has already proved to be as *popular*
 - over the past 30 years its concepts have circulated amongst scholars worldwide





Scholars who have adopted RT in T&I studies...

- rely heavily on **Gutt's** (1991/2000, 2001) seminal work
 - definition of T&I activity as *interlingual interpretive use*
- shed light on a **plethora** of phenomena – from DMs to enrichment - observed in data sets
 - characterized by different sizes, drawn from various professional settings, and analysed according to numerous methods
- tend to adopt an **interdisciplinary, descriptive, qualitative method of inquiry**
 - seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the **meaning**, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world
- Unlike TS studies, however, RT-informed approaches to **interpreting** have mainly focused on the *product*, rather than the process



Tools and notions can be implemented
and related to each other...

... with a view to creating *curricula* and *working* in the field of T&I:

- role of cross- and meta-pragmatic competence
- the notion of quality: faithfulness plus relevance
- strategies chosen by the mediator to transfer the SL message should have succeeded in making his rendition *interpreting resemble the ST*
- Attention to **education, recruitment policies, regulation** (where appropriate) and raising **awareness of professional consciousness** seem to be key factors.
- All the more, the **inclusion of all key players** in this process appears to be critical



Future avenues: A unified account of T&I?

- RT-based research in IS has far from exhausted its field of enquiry, especially given its an interdisciplinary outlook
- YET, no single model, however complex and elaborate, could hope to be validated as an account for the phenomenon as a whole
- Many scholars (e.g., Inghilleri 2012) have pointed towards an **all-around account of T&I**, yet the integration of cognitive pragmatics and social and intercultural studies still awaits **large-scale investigation**



See you at... ARTTI 1!

- *“The Application of Relevance Theory to Translation and Interpreting: Perspectives on Practice and Research”, 9-10 February 2023 UNINT, Rome*

- **GOAL:**

provide researcher working within the field of RT pragmatics and T&I studies, with an intellectually stimulating environment in which to discuss their current research, present findings and highlight current problems

- **2 days:**

1. TS & RT
2. IS & RT

- **Keynote Speakers:**

1. Fabio Alves Federal (University of Minas Gerais)
2. Robin Setton (formerly GITIS (Taipei), SISU (Shanghai) and ETI (Geneva))



- First Call for papers: **16 July 2022**
- Submission deadline: **15 October 2022**
- Deadline for notification of participation: **15 November 2022**
- Conference registration deadline: **30 January 2023**
- Conference (with the possibility of online or in-person attendance): **9-10 February 2023**

Thank you!

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