MonTI, the peer-reviewed international journal published by the University of Alicante, University Jaume I of Castellón and University of Valencia, aims to provide “in-depth analysis of translation- and interpreting-related matters that meet high standards of scientific rigour, fosters debate and promotes plurality” (Muñoz Martín 2014: 385). Special Issue 1, which was published in 2014 and is dedicated to translation process research as well as to cognitive and psycholinguistic approaches to translation and interpreting, certainly delivers on that objective. The thirteen articles compiled in this volume are written by some of the leading scholars in translation process research (TPR). They give an extensive, yet detailed, overview of this area of Translation Studies, zooming in on a variety of research topics, theoretical frameworks, data-collection and data-analysis methods.

The volume lacks an explicit introduction, but the first two articles by the volume’s editor Ricardo Muñoz Martín serves to contextualize the contributions in the volume. In these articles, Muñoz Martín reviews (in Spanish and English) the literature on TPR from 2006 to 2014, discussing the most prominent research topics and pinpointing the advances that have been made in the study of these topics and in the use of research methods and tools. This “blurry snapshot” of TPR gives the reader a taste of what is to come in the following articles.

The next article presents the first results of the PACTE group’s research into acquisition of translation competence (ATC). This research project builds on the group’s previous study of translation competence (TC) (PACTE 2011). The latter showed that TC implies a dynamic concept of translation and that declarative knowledge of translation is related to procedural knowledge of translation projects. To examine how this declarative knowledge of translation is acquired, the PACTE group took simultaneous measurements among 130 participants, i.e., first-year, second-year, third-year and fourth-year translation students as well as recent graduates. The control group consisted of 35 professional translators from the group’s previous research into TC. The practical reasons that the authors themselves put forward to use this research design instead of a longitudinal study are comprehensible. However, more control of the actual comparability of the groups and a replication of the study among students of other translation programs would have strengthened this methodological decision. The validity assessment and subsequent adaptation of the questionnaire used in the research design is, in contrast, very thorough. The results of the study seem to confirm the findings of the TC project, since the students’ concept of translation becomes increasingly dynamic throughout the translation program. Interestingly, there is a sharp rise in dynamism to be observed between the first and second year students even though the students had had only one semester of practical translation courses and no translation theory. Another interesting finding is that the data from the professional translators point to a less dynamic concept than the students’. The article presents a work in progress, but already prompts a number of interesting questions, e.g., how and when will the dynamic concept of translation in fact evolve into a dynamic translation process approach, and what will the effect of translation theory in the first-year of a translation program be on the students’ concept of translation?

In “The language-(in)dependence of writing skills: Translation as a tool in writing process research and writing instruction”, the fourth article in the volume, Susanne Göpferich and Bridget Nelezen report on a study in which 6 German students were asked to write a popular-science article of approximately 500 words in their L1 (German) on the basis of a longer academic text that they had previously written in their L2 (English). In order to achieve a functional translation, the participants were explicitly instructed not to translate the text literally and to introduce improvements in the L2 text if and when necessary. The analysis of the products and processes (registered by TAP and keystroke logging) showed that the use of translation as a tool in writing education has
its advantages and disadvantages. Translation may serve as a cognitive relief strategy in writing and can stimulate students to be more critical of the logical structure and argumentation of their texts. However, translation may also cause interference and fixedness on the source text leading to linguistic and pragmatic errors in the target language. The study reported on in this article answers the call for a more integrationalist research approach to text production (as voiced by Schubert 2009, and Dam-Jensen/Heine 2013), illustrating the need for more research into the commonalities and differences between translation and writing competence.

In the fifth article of the volume, Fabio Alves, José Luiz Gonçalves and Karina S. Szpak draw on Relevance Theory and, in particular, on the concepts of conceptual and procedural encodings. According to Relevance Theory, the function of these encodings is to expand or constrain respectively the inferential processing of an utterance (Muñoz Martín 2014: 155). Alves, Gonçalves and Szpak use these concepts to examine the relation between processing effort and cognitive effect in translation. They convincingly show that processing effort is higher and more complex for the translation of procedural encodings than for conceptual encodings, as can be observed in the relatively longer processing time, the higher number of micro translation units and eye fixations. The merit of this study not only resides in empirically validating relevance-theoretic claims about the translation process. It also showcases an innovative and intricate methodological approach, focusing on areas of interest in the source text, micro and macro translation units in the logging data as well as the number and duration of fixations in the eyetracking data. This approach may also be useful for testing hypotheses that have theoretical underpinnings other than Relevance Theory.

At this point, the volume turns the reader’s attention to the data-collection methods frequently used in TPR. Birgitta Englund Dimitrova and Elisabet Tiselius’ contribution addresses the validity of the method of retrospection. They report on a study that examines whether retrospective problem reports are confirmed by problem indicators in translation and interpreting process data. Their findings suggest that the representativeness of retrospective data must be treated with caution. The data analysis shows that, on the one hand, not all problems visible in the process data were verbalized in retrospection and, on the other, that not all verbalized problems could be observed in the process data, especially in the translation data. Although these results seem cause for concern for future studies using retrospection, they should not be readily generalized given the small sample size of this study (i.e., data from one relatively small task performed by 6 translators and 6 interpreters). Moreover, the researchers themselves argue that these results may be influenced by methodological choices in the data analysis, such as potentially excessive strictness in the definition of process indicators as well as the coding system used for the retrospective protocols. Nevertheless, this study not only has important implications for future research that will use retrospective verbal reports, but also demonstrates the importance of research into the validity and reliability of measurement instruments.

The next article focuses on another data collection method frequently used in TPR: eye-tracking. In this well-written article, Kristian Tangsgaard Hvelplund discusses in a clear and critical manner a number of methodological issues associated with collecting, analysing and interpreting eye-tracking data in translation research. He starts by explaining the basics (e.g., the suitability and the pros and cons of different types of eye-trackers). Subsequently, he discusses the potential weaknesses of the eye-mind and immediacy assumptions that underlie the collection of eye-tracking data while simultaneously giving tips and tricks on how to control for confounding factors that may impact the reliability and validity of the data. The third part of the article is dedicated to specific eye-movement measures, such as fixations, pupil size, gaze time and heat maps. Hvelplund concludes by stressing the importance of assessing the quality of eye-tracking data, e.g., by checking fixation measures, the gaze time on screen and/or the gaze sample to fixation percentage. This article is a must-read, not only for researchers who want to start using eye-tracking, but also for seasoned researchers to keep a critical eye on using and interpreting eye-tracking data.

Gregory M. Shreve, Erik Angelone and Isabel Lacruz report in the eighth article on a study of
the efficacy of screen recording (SR) in the other-revision of translations. They build on a 2011 study, in which Angelone found that translation students (German into English) detected and corrected significantly more errors when they self-revised while using SR, than when they were using think-aloud protocols and Integrated Problem and Decision Reporting. In contrast with other logging protocols, SR is less intrusive in the translator’s process and provides the self-reviser with a more detailed and more complete insight into the areas of difficulty in the translation process. The findings of the follow-up study by Shreve and colleagues point to a similar efficacy of SR in other-revision, especially for mistranslation errors, independently of the source language used (German and Spanish). Using event segmentation theory, the researchers convincingly argue that, in other-revision, SR allows the reviser to perceive the same activities or events that the translator perceived while simultaneously recalling his or her own similar (i.e., translation) activities after these have been filtered through his or her own event schemata stored in the episodic long-term memory. These interesting findings and interpretations have important implications for both translation pedagogy and future research into the various forms of revision.

In “The impact of translator’s ideology on the translation process: a reaction time experiment”, by Ana María Rojo López and Marisa Ramos Caro, yet another experimental technique is touched upon: priming. In this study, twelve translators were asked to translate a number of English expressions, but before each translation they were presented with either a positive or a negative prime, i.e., words that were potentially consistent with or contrary to their ideological views. Statistical analysis reveals that translators who were presented with a negative prime needed significantly longer time to find an adequate translation than when presented with a positive prime, regardless of the ideology they subscribed to. Interestingly, no significant interaction between prime and ideology could be observed, suggesting that ideology is “not a compelling ‘a priori’ force” that makes translators work slower or faster (Muñoz Martin 2014: 264). Despite certain limitations in terms of sample size and participant selection, this study possesses methodological value as an innovative attempt to empirically measure the influence of ideology on the translation process.

In the next article, Marisa Presas Corbella and Celia Martín de León address a topic that to date has received little attention in Translation Studies: the role of implicit theories in the translation process. The scholars reconstruct the implicit theories of ten translation students by analysing which metaphorical expressions these students used to conceptualize translation in several tasks (questionnaires, interviews, essays and translation commentaries). The discourse analysis shows that the students’ implicit theories were predominantly based on the metaphors of transfer and change. The scholars assume that these, rather “naïve”, implicit theories will result in a micro-strategic translation approach. The (unfortunately rather limited) process data analysis of five translation tasks indeed seems to confirm this hypothesis: the students focused primarily on the word level and adopted a linear, word-for-word, approach.

At this point, the volume turns the reader’s attention to the theoretical underpinnings of TPR. The following articles make compelling arguments to complement current TPR with other paths of inquiry. In “Stepping into others’ shoes: A cognitive perspective on target audience orientation in written translation”, Matthias Apfelthaler theoretically and methodologically widens the research conducted by Englund Dimitrova (2005), Hansen (2006) and Shreve (2009). By combining insights from cognitive and sociolinguistic studies into translation with findings from neuroscience, he convincingly hypothesizes that cognitive empathy may help translators to orient themselves toward the target-audience. Apfelthaler subsequently proposes an innovative multi-method quasi-experiment, in which data will be collected on the product, process-behavioural and process-verbal levels. In this experiment, his claim will be validated when a positive correlation can be observed between the Empathy Quotient (as measured by Baron Cohen and Wheelwright’s 2004 questionnaire), on the one hand, and frequency of target-audience related adaptations in the product (e.g., explicitations and reductions), target-audience related behaviour in the process (e.g., pauses, recursivity, revisions), and references to the target audience in the retrospective verbalizations, on the other
hand. The author’s proposal for hypothesis testing offers promising avenues for future research, and many researchers in the field would welcome the results of such research.

In the twelfth article of this special issue, Hanna Risku argues that the scope of TPR can be widened by viewing translation as a dynamic process of networks, actors and environments and by departing from situated, embodied and extended cognition approaches. This will allow TPR to be extended from mental processes to social, historical, artefact-mediated and environmental processes. Risku proposes qualitative, ethnographic field research as a useful method for this purpose. As an illustration, she presents a case study of this kind, which focuses on a freelance translator in direct contact with a client, who is also the writer of the ST. Building on participant observation and interviews, Risku shows that, despite the simple principal-agent dyad, the networks of both the translator and the client are in fact complex. The case study also reveals how the translator iteratively “externalizes” part of the translation process, transforming mental processes into interaction with outer stimuli such as bodily movements, artefacts in her workplace or other self-produced stimuli (e.g., mumbling the TT aloud). Despite the limitations of this case study, its careful research design, strong theoretical grounding and interesting initial results provide rich material to build on and explore in further research.

The last article, by Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow, reports on another example of TPR at the workplace, which is of a larger scope than the research reported by Risku. The Capturing Translation Processes project studied staff translators at the largest language service provider (LSP) in Switzerland, for a period of six months, using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, retrospective, ethnographic observations, screen recording, version analysis and translation evaluation. Ehrensberger-Dow describes in detail how they dealt with practical challenges, such as selecting the right LSP and balancing the research design in terms of participant groups (level of experience), task demands and source materials. Recruitment and loss of participants, confidentiality and security standards of the LSP and even determining the project’s completion date proved to require thought and flexibility from the researchers as well. Furthermore, some data-collection methods (e.g., keystroke logging and eyetracking) that work perfectly in laboratory conditions were difficult if not impossible to use in workplace settings. Ehrensberger-Dow does not only discuss the challenges of research at the workplace, but also gives useful recommendations for tackling certain practical issues and suggests topics that beg further research (e.g., workplace constraints). As such, she clearly delivers on the objective of the article, namely “to open up the discussion of good practices of applied translation process research” (Muñoz Martín 2014: 359).

This volume contains a wealth of information on a variety of aspects central to TPR. Unfortunately, readers interested in interpreting will probably be left feeling slightly disappointed since only one article addresses interpreting. This Special Issue is nonetheless a highly informative read for researchers, lecturers and students of translation alike, since it shows the diversity of TPR, in terms of theoretical underpinnings, research topics and methodological approaches. The volume is also an enjoyable, well-edited read, with frequent cross-references between the various articles that aid the reader in establishing links between the different contributions. At the beginning of the volume, Muñoz Martín remarks that “the time seems ripe to consider whether it would be good to have a focused TPR research journal” (2014: 74). The panorama of TPR painted in this volume provides ample evidence for that suggestion. In addition, channelling TPR research in a focused journal would allow for fruitful cross-fertilisation and for promising collaborative and multifaceted research projects to develop in the future.

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