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Review of Andrea Musumeci. 2025. *Rethinking Translators: Constraints, Affordances, Postures*. Singapore: Springer Nature. 266 p

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Translators occupy a central role in the translation process for their professional competence and extensive practical experience. However, the mechanism through which they successfully deliver translation products in specific tasks, as well as how their expertise is effectively transmitted to students in translation teaching, remain critical concerns in translation studies. Attempts dedicated to address these issues are witnessed from linguistic, sociological and other relevant perspectives. *Rethinking Translators: Constraints, Affordances, Postures* engages with these issues by introducing concepts like “constraints”, “affordances” and “postures” to reframe translators’ role and decision-making process. Theoretically, the book synthesizes and extends existing definitions, tackling underexplored dimensions to rethink the role of translators (Chapters 1–3). While the primary focus seems theoretical, Andrea Musumeci grounds the discussion in pedagogical adaptability to bridge theory and practice (Chapter 4). By integrating these concepts into an ecological framework for translation competence, the work demonstrates its practical relevance through rigorous case analyses and longitudinal data from action research, shedding innovative light on translation teaching (Chapter 5), with the final chapter (Chapter 6) concluding the book. Structurally, the monograph advances with interdisciplinary depth, connecting theoretical reflection and practical application. Its dual emphases not only enrich translation theories but also provide pedagogical experience for the discipline, marking a significant contribution to the *New Frontiers in Translation Studies* series.

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At the outset, Musumeci's work opens with the historical evolution of translation as a discipline (Introduction). What distinguishes translation as a field is its dual-rooted nature: it emerges from practical tasks while simultaneously developing through theoretical reflections grounded in extensive translation practice. Historically, these two trajectories (i.e., theoretical and practical) have long progressed in parallel. According to the book, today, global awareness gradually recognizes that "a fluent polyglot is not necessarily a professional translator, and vice versa" (xii), which raises attention towards the improvement of translator training. Against this backdrop, the book positions itself at the intersection of theory and practice, charting their convergence, which is a central concern of the author.

The book's theoretical framework is established through five fundamental premises, presented as working definitions in Chapter 1, which serve as scaffolding for subsequent discussions. Among these, Musumeci pays particular attention to "norms", as they articulate the regulatory frameworks governing translator's decision-making process under "constraints", which lays the conceptual foundation for rethinking translators within the context of constraints. Building on Toury's (1980) seminal sociological conceptualization and Schäffner's (1999) elaboration by incorporating constraints and embodiment, the author develops a nuanced understanding of translation norms. Different from others, Musumeci innovatively puts these concepts within the background of translators to depict the decision-making process in translation. Crucially, the author distinguishes between translation norms and language norms, emphasizing the former have to be operational to effectively guide a translator's decision-making process through their preferential hierarchy of constraints. Nonetheless, due to the problematic operational feasibility of translation norms, pedagogical challenges need to be addressed. Accordingly, Musumeci proposes innovative concepts of strategic or tactical norms, aiming for their operability, which inform the book's subsequent in-depth explorations.

To facilitate a more comprehensive rethinking of translators, it is necessary to introduce additional theoretical terms in Chapter 2 to clarify their distinctions; otherwise, it remains challenging for novice translators, posing significant obstacles to pedagogical implementation. Hence, the monograph heeds translator behaviors, illuminating the dynamic interplay between these concepts through an interdisciplinary lens to establish a robust conceptual framework. These terms (e.g., norms, habitus, constraint, affordance, etc.) in the framework constitute an ecosystem of translation, which encompasses both the translator and the surrounding environment. Amongst them, "habitus" enables the explanation for translator's decision-making process. However, due to its invisible nature (involving embodiment and unconscious learning processes), Musumeci also mentions "translator's posture" as a more observable manifestation of habitus. This conceptual move provides a pedagogical solution to teaching habitus, which will be discussed extensively in the coming chapters.

Translator's posture, an abstract concept, requires comprehensive unpacking to facilitate its application in pedagogical contexts. In Chapter 3, the author reexamines constraints within the process of literary translation. Adopting a functionalist perspective, it is argued that translators need to exercise autonomy in dealing with constraints, strategically choosing to either comply with or override them. As a result, situational awareness enables translators to behave systematically towards constraints, which can be achieved by creating situated learning environments with embodied methods. This chapter particularly emphasizes the role of metacognitive abilities in fostering tactical and conscious decision-making, which in turn highlights the vital role of constraints and affordances, as they allow translators to justify their translation behaviors. Though cognitive translation studies are frequently cited, the author grounds them at a theoretical level for reasoning. Taken together, constraints and affordances support and facilitate the translator's posture, precluding the formal introduction of the concept: posture.

Chapter 4 synthesizes the preceding theoretical discussions to develop the concept of translator's posture systematically. The analysis begins with an investigation of translation skills and competence by reviewing the persistent gap between academic training programs and industry standards. In practice, traditional translation approaches, predominantly rooted in literary and linguistic studies, fail to adequately address the practical demands of translation. As Toury (2012: 282) observes, the development of translation as a professional skill requires "a certain combination of personality features and environmental circumstances", termed as an 'eco-relational system'. Corroborating this statement, Musumeci traces the evolution from behaviorist to constructivist paradigms, advocating for a student-centered approach to better adapt to the practical demands of translation. Specifically, the author further elaborates by juxtaposing constraints, affordances and postures. Drawing from sports training, "the ability to perceive and respond functionally to affordances among interacting constraints in a dynamic performance context becomes the benchmark to discern experts from novices in certain sports" (Seifert et al. 2016: 163). Therefore, according to the book, this framework extends to translation practice as well: constraint mapping and affordance-based formative assessment serve to facilitate postural learning. Through an extensive review of postural studies across both literary and sociological areas, the author identifies posture as an underexplored domain for translation scholars, an insight that expands the scope of postural research.

Based on translation courses from the Department of Linguistics and Translation (LT) at City University of Hong Kong, the proposed approach to translation training is examined empirically in Chapter 5. The analysis concentrates on LT's discovery-enriched curriculum, which implements the framework through distinct pedagogical phases including translation report drafting and formative assessment, among others. This chapter presents a longitudinal action study involving both students and instructors from LT. Findings from questionnaires and interviews demonstrate that postural learning effectively facilitates practice-

oriented translation training through embodied cognition (Risku & Rogl 2020). These results substantiate two key conclusions: (1) the embodied approach to translation pedagogy generates measurable efficacy; and (2) the theoretical constructs (involving constraints, affordances, etc.) developed in previous chapters provide valuable resources for the design of teaching. Through the study, this monograph initiates a theoretical framework and delivers empirical assessment accordingly, highlighting its insights both theoretically and pedagogically.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 6) reaffirms the key contributions and significance through a comprehensive review of its theoretical and empirical investigations. By integrating core concepts within an ecological framework, the book offers significant conceptual insights to rethink translators in a systematic way that advances approaches to translation teaching. On the other hand, the longitudinal action research delivers a robust empirical validation for the proposed approach to postural learning, indicating its effectiveness in authentic educational contexts through an embodied way, combining both constraint mapping and affordance-based assessment. While charting new directions of postural studies in the field, Musumeci also acknowledges its limitations and identifies promising avenues for future research. Notably, the findings suggest potential for broader institutional and cross-language adoption and adaptation, particularly through AI-enhanced and practice-oriented methodologies. These insightful perspectives position the work as a springboard for subsequent innovations in both translation research and teaching.

As a whole, Musumeci's book advances the field on both theoretical and practical fronts. Theoretically, while concepts like constraints have existed, the systematic incorporation of these conceptual constructs into an ecological framework offers interdisciplinary perspectives to rethink translators based on constraints, affordances and postures. In particular, the author's meticulous review of key scholars associated with each concept provides readers with great conceptual clarity regarding its contextualized contents within current theoretical landscape. Practically, the theoretical scope of this book is extended to pedagogical applications through rigorous action research. It is the successful synthesis of theoretical and practical dimensions into a coherent whole that makes this work particularly noteworthy. Musumeci maintains this balance while keeping translators as the focal point throughout the process. It convincingly establishes translation as an ecosystem comprising a variety of interacting factors, demonstrating how postural learning through embodiment emerges as an effective pedagogical approach. These discoveries enhance the visibility of translators as professional subjects and provide a comprehensive framework for developing translation competence.

Despite its systematic theoretical contributions and well-structured pedagogical insights, the volume leaves several questions unanswered: To what extent is the constraint-based decision-making process applicable across diverse translator profiles? What are the exact cognitive and behavioral mechanisms

through which posture is acquired via embodied learning? How does postural learning function at a cognitive level, especially concerning metacognition? Although the action research showcases the feasibility of postural learning to a certain extent, exploring the mechanism behind it remains an integral step to deliver more targeted implications. As mentioned by Musumeci, it is necessary to conduct more research for inter-institutional and cross-language assessments of the pedagogical approach. Therefore, it would benefit from further empirical validation to assess its applicability and explore its underlying mechanisms. Upon answering the above questions, the framework of this book would be reinforced, and its applicability would be broadened across different translator training contexts as well, ensuring its utility for both academia and industry.

In summation, *Rethinking Translators: Constraints, Affordances, Postures* delivers a multidimensional framework for rethinking translators. With constraints and affordances (manifestations of the translator's posture), translators are rethought as subjects who think aloud their operations, indicating that their “black boxes” during translation are uncovered through posture, thus enabling the inherent competence of translators to be transmitted unreservedly to a wide range of learners. It bridges the persistent divide between industrial translation practice and institutional translation training, which has been a longstanding challenge for the discipline. Empirically, Musumeci's proposed postural learning approach gains support through carefully documented action research, demonstrating its viability in authentic educational contexts. The volume demonstrates its particular strength in its recognition of translation as an interactive ecosystem by locating translation within a wider environment. Given the development of GenAI, the independent role of translators with metacognition and embodiment becomes ever more pivotal for detecting inappropriateness of AI-generated contents (Tian et al. 2025), highlighting the practical significance of the book. As a thought-provoking integration of theory and practice, it adapts to translation researchers, educators, and practitioners alike, serving as a theoretical foundation for investigating translators as well as practical guidance for developing targeted programs. In a nutshell, *Rethinking Translators* establishes itself as an invaluable resource for comprehensive, multidimensional engagement with the understanding of the translation process and translator training.

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