Foreword

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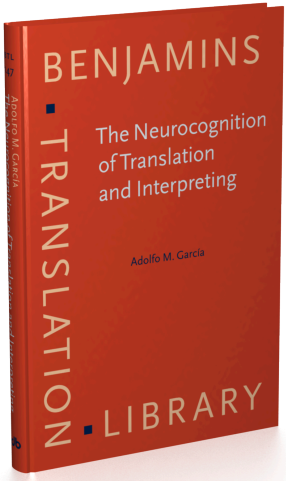

Pages xi–xiii of
The Neurocognition of Translation and Interpreting
Adolfo M. García
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Foreword

Over millennia, translation and interpreting have been studied from a myriad of perspectives. Their scientific inquiry, however, is a much more recent endeavor. Locating that inquiry in the human brain from an integrated, multidimensional perspective is still uncharted territory and it has recently been called by Tymoczko (2012) "a known unknown" in the field of translation and interpreting studies. Therefore, it is not surprising that a book entitled *The Neurocognition of Translation and Interpreting* might raise some skeptical eyebrows. So far, the most prominent approaches in cognitive translation and interpreting studies should be considered as non-neural. In other words, these approaches seldom draw on brain-informed data and rely predominantly on linguistic and behavioral results. The majority of these approaches have built extensively on an empirical orientation heavily influenced by the information-processing paradigm. Recently, however, a new trend has emerged in cognitive translation and interpreting studies, advocating in favor of 4EA cognition, namely, a view which considers human cognition, and indirectly the act of translating and interpreting, to be embedded, extended, embodied, enacted, and affective (Muñoz Martín 2017; Risku 2017). When confronted with the present volume, it is then only natural that readers versed in mainstream approaches within 4EA cognition would ask: why should translation and interpreting studies be concerned with neurocognition at all? To that remark one could add an even stronger question: why is it important to locate translation in the brain when cognitive translation and interpreting studies seem to be moving away from a strict experimental paradigm towards a view of cognition which is situated and relies on contextual factors surrounding cognitive aspects related to the act of translating and interpreting?

It is a quite bold step for an author to take a preeminently subject-centered and biologically grounded outlook within this current trend and state loud and clear that, indeed, looking at translation in the brain offers a cornerstone for an embedded, situated view of cognitive translation and interpreting studies; a view which is necessary in terms of complementarity and relevant due to its elucidating potential. As Adolfo García shows in this book, rationalist, observational, introspective, corpus-based, and quantitative approaches have offered an enormous contribution to this still fledgling field. From an ontological and a methodological viewpoint, these approaches are all "non-neural." Yet, as García reminds us, "their

underlying research procedures do not necessarily entail a rejection of the neurological basis of the observed phenomena." Nevertheless, none of these approaches is capable of elucidating the intricacies related to what happens in the human brain when translation and interpreting tasks are carried out, thus failing to delve into a critical component of 4EA cognition. This is perhaps why there has been some recent interest in looking beyond the black box and what García terms the "known unknown" fallacy, with scholars in cognitive translation and interpreting studies taking an active interest in brain-based research.

The prospects of embracing a neurocognitive approach to study translation and interpreting are now becoming clearer and this is the ambitious and well-accomplished goal of *The Neurocognition of Translation and Interpreting*. By revisiting paradigms that have informed cognitive translation and interpreting studies so far, García paves the way for discussing the toolkit used in the field in terms of experimental designs, the role of verbal and non-verbal paradigms, the use of non-invasive techniques, and ways to interpret data. The acknowledgement of what has been achieved by research drawing on verbal report protocols as well as key-logged and eye-tracking data in behavioral studies also throws light on what still remains inside the black box as a "known unknown." Without striving further in an attempt to answer these questions, "a massive endeavor could be rendered irreparably flawed if basic elements are not considered from the outset." This quote from García's book calls for the need to complement information acquired through behavioral tasks with findings which can only be obtained by looking at the physiology of the human brain to make a case for approaching cognitive processes related to translation and interpreting as "neuronal teamwork."

The Neurocognition of Translation and Interpreting does it by building up from breakdown, i.e., by learning from brain-related lesions and how they can inform brain-related processes concerning translation and interpreting. The book also looks at the dynamics of directionality and at the intricacies of cognitive segmentation in translation and interpreting tasks. Additionally, it illuminates the ongoing debate led by researchers interested in 4EA cognition by complementing and even extending the discussion about how a brain-related approach can inform a situated view of translation as a cognitive activity. In short, it's all about connections, units, time, and distance that make up what Schilperoord (1996) calls "cognitive rhythm" in behavioral terms.

Without a shadow of doubt, looking at cognitive rhythms in the translator's and interpreter's brain definitely contributes to a better understanding of a story in the making. *The Neurocognition of Translation and Interpreting* will easily convince interested readers that it is worth looking at translation and interpreting as activities embedded in the brain. The book does show that it is possible to tell the story from a different perspective and, thus, boost our understanding of brain-related

phenomena as far as translation and interpreting are concerned. Instead of dwelling on "known unknowns," García is able to convince readers that the neurocognition of translation and interpreting constitutes a set of "unknown knowns." By doing this, it throws light on a story in the making; a story about which it is worth writing and reading.

Fabio Alves
Belo Horizonte, December 23, 2018

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