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Translation competence and its acquisition
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22.1 Introduction

In recent decades, Translation Studies has been concerned with describing the knowledge and abilities translators need to translate appropriately. This has resulted in research evolving around the notion of translation competence and translation competence acquisition.

The notion of competence itself has a long history as the subject of analysis in other disciplines such as applied linguistics, work psychology, and pedagogy. The concept of “communicative competence” has been used in applied linguistics since the mid-1960s, with a long line of research by scholars such as Hymes (1971), Canale-Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Widdowson (1989), Spolsky (1989), Bachman (1990), etc. In the sphere of recruitment in the job market, research into professional competences dates as far back as the beginning of the 1970s in the field of work psychology with McClelland (1973) and the development of a behavioural approach to the study of competences. This was followed by various studies (Boyatzis, 1982, 1984; Spencer et al., 1994; etc.), which established competence models (known as “competency dictionaries”) for specific job profiles based on studying professionals who perform well in the tasks required for these posts. Since the turn of the 21st century, a new pedagogical model known as competence-based training (CBT) has gained support. As Lasnier (2000, p. 22) points out, this is the logical continuation of the previous model (objectives-based learning). In CBT, competences are the core of curriculum design, and it advocates an integrated model of teaching, learning, and evaluation. The basis for CBT can be found in cognitive-constructivist and socio-constructivist learning theories.

In Translation Studies there is no research tradition comparable to that in other disciplines. The study of the notion of translation competence (TC) started within the field of Translation Studies in the mid-1980s and began to figure more predominantly in the 1990s. Alongside this, research has also been developed on translation competence acquisition (TCA), although fewer models have been proposed than in the case of TC. In both cases, however, little empirical research has been developed.
22.2 Translation competence

Two major periods in the evolution of research into TC can be distinguished: the first until the end of the 1990s, which was the beginning of studies into TC; and the second from 2000 onwards, which was a period of consolidation and the beginning of empirical validation.²

22.2.1 Early studies on translation competence

With the exception of Wilss (1976) and Koller (1979), pioneers in this area, the study of the notion of TC began within the field of Translation Studies in the mid-1980s.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the first proposals for TC models; the majority of these were componential models, which focused on describing the components that make up TC. These were neither specific nor extensive studies on TC; most authors only dealt with this topic peripherally, and many of them derived from interest in curriculum design. Nevertheless, their major interest lies in the fact that they represent early reflections on the characteristic workings about TC and its components.

22.2.1.1 The components of translation competence

According to Wilss (1976, p. 120), translators must have three competences: source-language receptive competence (the ability to decode and understand the source text); target-language reproductive competence (the ability to use linguistic and textual resources in the target language); and super-competence (the ability to transfer messages between the source and target culture linguistic and text systems). Wilss defines TC as “the ability to integrate the two monolingual competences on a higher level, i.e. on the level of the text” (Wilss, 1982, p. 58).

Delisle (1980, p. 235) proposed that four competences were needed to know how to translate, although he did not make use of the term TC: linguistic competence, encyclopaedic competence, comprehension competence and reformulation competence.

Roberts (1984) differentiated five competences: linguistic competence—the ability to understand in source language and formulate in target language; transfer competence (traductionnelle)—the ability to grasp the meaning and to reformulate it, avoiding linguistic interference(s); methodological competence—the ability to find, document and assimilate suitable terminology; thematic competence; and technical competence—the ability to use different resources and tools to translate.

Hewson and Martin (1991, p. 52) distinguished three types of competences in a translator: acquired interlinguistic competence, i.e. linguistic competence in the two languages; a dissimilative competence, which consists of the aptitude to generate and dissimilate homologous statements and to define and recreate socio-cultural norms; and transferred competence, which includes not only what the translator knows but also that which is accumulated through dictionaries, data banks, etc.

In two studies, Nord distinguished three components in TC. In the first study, these are transfer competence, linguistic competence and cultural competence (Nord, 1988/1991, p. 161). In the second, Nord (1992, p. 47) sets out the following essential competences: reception competence and text analysis, research competence, transfer competence, text production competence, translation quality assessment competence, and linguistic and cultural competence—source and target.

Neubert (1994, p. 412) proposed three sub-competences in TC (which he called “translational competence”): linguistic competence, subject competence and transfer competence.
In particular, he stressed the importance of transfer competence as that which distinguishes translators from other professionals and governs the other competences.

Kiraly (1995, p. 108) offered an “integrated model” for translator competence, which incorporated: (1) knowledge concerning situational factors that may be involved in a given translation task; (2) translation-relevant knowledge that the translator possesses, i.e. linguistic knowledge in the source and target languages (syntactic, lexico-semantic, socio-linguistic and textual), cultural knowledge related to the source and target languages, and specialized knowledge; and (3) the translator’s ability to begin the appropriate intuitive and controlled psycholinguistic processes to formulate the target text and monitor its adaptation to the original text.

Hurtado (1996a, p. 34; 1996b, p. 39) defined TC as the “ability to know how to translate” and distinguished five sub-competences: (1) linguistic competence in the two languages, composed of source-language comprehension and target-language production—written for a translator, or oral for an interpreter; (2) extra-linguistic competence, i.e. encyclopaedic, cultural and thematic knowledge; (3) transfer competence, which consists of knowing how to work through the translation process correctly, in other words knowing how to understand the original text and reformulate it in the target language according to the purpose of the translation and characteristics of the target reader; (4) professional competence, which consists of knowing how to document and how to use new technologies and knowing the job market; and (5) strategic competence: conscious and individual procedures used by translators to solve problems encountered during the translation process according to their specific needs.

Presas (1996) highlighted the distinction between TC and bilingual competence, considering TC as specific to reception and text production. According to Presas, TC is founded in a “pre-translation competence”, which consists of: knowledge of both languages, cultural awareness concerning these two languages, encyclopaedic knowledge, thematic knowledge and theoretical knowledge about translation. She pointed out two types of knowledge that make up and characterize TC: epistemic knowledge and operative knowledge. Epistemic knowledge includes knowledge of the two languages, such as cultural, encyclopaedic and thematic knowledge. As regards operative knowledge, she distinguished between nuclear, peripheral and tangential knowledge. Nuclear knowledge consists of reception of the source text for translating (identifying the “distances” and translation problems); setting up the translation project; and producing the translation. Peripheral knowledge refers to the specific instruments used by the translator and includes, among other things, the capacity to evaluate and use documentation sources; the capacity to acquire knowledge related to new or unfamiliar thematic areas; and the capacity to evaluate other translations. Finally, tangential knowledge refers to the ability to use standard work tools (text editing technology and desktop publishing). Presas underlines the importance of the relationships between these fields of knowledge.

Hansen (1997) made a distinction between implicit (automatized, unconscious) and explicit (conscious) knowledge and abilities. She distinguished three interacting sub-competences: translational competence; social, cultural and intercultural competence; and communicative competence. Translational competence consists of two competences: implicit and explicit. This author defines implicit translational competence as the ability to extract pertinent information from the source text considering the intention for which the translation has been commissioned, and to produce the target text so that it complies with the intended purpose. Explicit translational competence comprises the explicit knowledge of translation methods and the ability to choose the most appropriate, as well as strategies to recognize and solve translation problems. Social, cultural and intercultural competence include both implicit and explicit knowledge: implicit knowledge (socially and culturally conditioned) of one’s own social and cultural context and of other contexts, as well as explicit knowledge of the social
and cultural norms and differences. Finally, communicative competence includes pragmatic competence and linguistic competence.

Risku’s (1998) is the most in-depth study on TC. This concerns a model along “pragmatic-cooperative” lines. Risku proposes a modular conception of TC, comprising four sub-competences which work together to construct meaning: setting up the macro-strategy, integrating information, planning and decision making, and self-organization. The purpose of the macro-strategy is to anticipate the communication context for the translation. Integrating information facilitates creating and contrasting representations of situations in the source text and the translation, as well as evaluating documentation. Planning and decision making ensure intratextual coherence and contrastivity. Finally, self-organization allows reflection on, and continual assessment of, decisions taken.

22.2.1.2 Translation “abilities” and “skills”

Some authors prefer to use the term “translation skill” or “translation ability”. One such example is Lowe (1987), who used the term “translation skill” and distinguished eight categories of knowledge and skills which map out the ideal translator profile: source-language reading comprehension; ability to produce target-language texts; understanding the source-language style; mastery of the target-language style; comprehension of socio-linguistic and cultural aspects in the source language; mastery of socio-linguistic and cultural aspects in the target language; speed; and the “X factor”, which according to Lowe refers to a quality that is difficult to define, but which renders a translation clearly superior to others given an equal rating (Lowe, 1987, p. 55).

Pym (1991, 1992), in turn, pointed out two “translation skills” that make up TC, which consist of the ability to generate different options for the source text, and the ability to choose one based on the specific end purpose and the target reader (Pym, 1992, p. 281).

The description by Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 205) of “translator abilities” is based on Bachman’s model (1990) of “communicative ability”: organizational competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence. They envisage a three-phase translation process (processing the source text, transfer and processing the target text) and assign a series of skills to each of them, although they point out that during the translation process these skills interact. The source-text processing phase, depending on the estimated effect of the source text on the reader, requires recognizing intertextuality and situationality; inferring intentionality, organizing texture and the text structure; and evaluating the informativity depending on whether these are “static texts” (easy to process because they conform to pre-established text norms and with end reader expectations) or “dynamic texts” (difficult to process because they do not comply with text norms or reader expectations). In the transfer phase, a strategic re-negotiation is developed, in which adjustments are made regarding efficiency, effectiveness and the relevance of the communicative task of the translator concerning specifying this task in order to fulfil a given rhetorical purpose. Target-text processing requires establishing intertextuality and situationality, creating intentionality, organizing the texture and structure of the text, and balancing the informativity on the basis of its impact on the target-text reader.

Vienne (1998) criticized the tendency to reduce TC to linguistic competences (text analysis and production) and advocated a definition of the abilities a professional translator needs in a given translation situation from a functionalist approach. This particular focus on training translators deliberately omits linguistic competences and focuses on four aspects: ability to analyse different translation situations; ability to manage and process information; ability to discuss the decisions taken with whoever commissions the translation; and ability to cooperate with other experts.
22.2.1.3 Translation competence and translation proficiency

Working from Chomsky’s distinction (1965) between competence and performance, Cao (1996) distinguished between TC and translation proficiency. She defined TC as many kinds of knowledge that are essential to the translation act (Cao, 1996, p. 326). Translation proficiency was defined as “the ability to mobilize translation competence to perform translation tasks in context for purposes of intercultural and interlingual communication” (Cao, 1996, p. 327). She considered translation proficiency as a global skill with various components for performing translation tasks.

She proposed three components for translation proficiency based on Bachman’s model of communicative language ability (Bachman, 1990): translational language competence, translational knowledge structures and translational strategic competence.

Likewise, her description of translational language competence was based on Bachman and included SL and TL organizational competence, consisting of grammatical and textual competence, and SL and TL pragmatic competence, consisting of illocutionary and socio-linguistic competence.

Translational knowledge structures include general, special and literary knowledge, akin to Snell-Hornby’s (1988) translation prototypology. General knowledge refers to knowledge about the world: ecology, material culture, social organization, etc. in the SL and TL language communities. Special knowledge includes specialist technical knowledge in different fields. Literary knowledge includes knowledge in areas including the Bible, stage, film, lyric, poetic and literary works, cultural history and literary studies.

Cao saw translational strategic competence as a mental ability that provides the means to relate the various components of translation proficiency during the translation process. This comprises two component parts: (1) assessment, planning and executive abilities inherent in all mental activities, including language use; (2) the skills demanded during the processing and non-verbal stage of reformulation and analogy by reasoning, specific to translation. This also includes psychological mechanisms: the cognitive aspect of human thought processes as well as the creative aspect.

Cao highlights the interaction between the various components of translation proficiency and the essential role of translational strategic competence. She concludes that translation is a special area of expertise that requires knowledge and specialization in many different areas, and points out that there are different levels of proficiency.

Cao’s distinction between TC (knowledge that is essential to the translation act) and translation proficiency (ability to mobilize TC to perform translation tasks) is not shared by all those TC models that include abilities to perform translation tasks and highlight the fundamental role of strategic competence.

22.2.1.4 Translation competence and expertise

According to Bell (1991), there are three possible ways of characterizing TC. The first is in terms of ideal bilingual competence in the Chomskyan sense, which according to Bell is inadequate. The second is as an expert system, i.e. generalizations based on observations of how translators work, which entails two basic components: (1) a knowledge base in the source and target languages, text types, domain knowledge and contrastive knowledge; (2) an inference mechanism to decode and code texts. The third is related to the second and adopts a multi-component approach to communicative competence. He distinguishes between grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competence, along the lines of Canale and Swain (1980), concluding that a translator must have linguistic competence in the two languages and communicative competence in the two cultures. Bell (1991, p. 43) defines translator competence as the “knowledge and skills the translator must possess in order to carry it [the translation process] out”.

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Gile (1995, pp. 4–5) analyses the components of translation expertise required for interpreting and translation, differentiating between the following areas of knowledge and skills: good passive knowledge of their passive working languages; good command of their active working languages; enough knowledge of the subjects of the texts or speeches they process; and the know-how to translate, referring to the conceptual framework and the interpreting and translation technical skills (comprehension of principles of fidelity and of professional rules of conduct as well as techniques for knowledge acquisition, language maintenance, problem solving, decision making, etc.).

The PACTE research group was set up in 1997 to carry out experimental research on TC acquisition. PACTE considers this process in terms of the development from novice to expert knowledge (PACTE, 2000, p. 103). It puts forward a holistic TC model that was first presented in 1998. In this first version of the model (PACTE, 2000), six interrelated, hierarchical sub-competences are proposed: (1) communicative competence in two languages; (2) extra-linguistic competence, including knowledge about translation as well as encyclopaedic and domain knowledge; (3) instrumental-professional competence, including both knowledge and skills related to the tools of the trade and the profession (knowledge and use of all kinds of documentation sources and new technologies; knowledge of the market and how a translator behaves professionally, especially in relation to professional ethics); (4) psycho-physiological competence, i.e. the ability to use all kinds of psychomotor, cognitive and attitudinal resources; (5) transfer competence, i.e. the core competence that integrates all the others, the ability to complete the transfer process from the ST to the TT; (6) strategic competence, including all procedures, conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, used to solve problems found during the translation process. Although all these competences are involved in TC, in PACTE’s 1998 model, transfer and strategic competences played a predominant role in the interrelation between competences.

22.2.1.5 Translating into L2 (inverse translation)

In reference to translating into L2, Beeby (1996, pp. 91–92) talks of an “ideal translator communicative competence”, which, broadly speaking, distinguishes four ideal sub-competences: (1) ideal translator grammatical competence—including linguistic knowledge and skills necessary to understand and express the literal meaning of utterances; (2) ideal translator socio-linguistic competence—the knowledge and ability necessary to produce and understand utterances adequately in the situational context of both cultures; (3) ideal translator discourse competence—the ability, in both languages, to produce formal cohesion and coherent meaning in different text genres; and (4) ideal translator transfer competence—mastering communication strategies that enable the transfer of meaning from the source to the target language and which may be used to improve communication or compensate for breakdowns. Beeby points out, however, the specificity of the translation towards the foreign language as regards the job market and capabilities.

Campbell (1998) also proposes a TC model for inverse translation, which comprises three relatively independent elements (1998, p. 152): target-language textual competence, “disposition” and “monitoring”. For Campbell, target-language textual competence is a central consideration in inverse translation. He uses the term “disposition” to refer to the (non-linguistic) capacity, which consists of the way the translation task is approached. Monitoring competence refers to the capacity to monitor and supervise the product. Campbell points out that these three components are reflected in the following questions (1998, p. 155): Can a translator produce stylistically appropriate translations in the target language? Does the translator have the right personality to be able to translate? Is the translator capable of producing a text that requires only the minimum of proofing?
22.2.1.6 Key features of this period

The following summarizes the most characteristic features of this first period (Table 22.1).

1. Focus on the description of components: The transfer competence. The merit of these early studies is in highlighting that TC requires additional competences beyond linguistic competences. The majority focus on describing the components of TC, proposing different components: language skills; extra-linguistic knowledge, documenting skills and the use of tools; and transfer competence. Proposing transfer competence as a component of TC is characteristic of this period.

These studies also illustrate that these components cover a wide range of areas: knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes. In addition, some authors underline the procedural nature of TC and talk rather of abilities, distinguishing between declarative and operative components and stressing the importance of the strategic component (Beeby, 1996; Cao, 1996; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Hurtado, 1996a, 1996b; PACTE, 2000; Presas, 1996).

2. Translation competence as a form of expertise. A few authors (Bell, 1991; Cao, 1996; Gile, 1995; PACTE, 2000) relate TC to expertise, although during this period they seem to confuse both concepts and do not clearly distinguish between TC and translation expertise.


4. Lack of specific studies. With the exception of some studies, such as those by Cao (1996), Presas (1996) or Risku (1998), the majority of these initial TC proposals are isolated references, which deal with the issue tangentially.

5. Dearth of definitions and legions of labels. What first needs to be pointed out is the lack of definitions for TC; as we have seen, many authors cover the topic of TC, but only a few offer definitions: Wilss (1982); Bell (1991); Cao (1996); Hurtado (1996a, 1996b). A certain diversity can also be seen as regards the terms used to refer to TC: transfer competence (Nord, 1988/1991, p. 160), translational competence (Chesterman, 1997, p. 147; Hansen, 1997, p. 205; Pym, 1993, p. 26; Toury, 1995, p. 250), translator’s competence (Kiraly, 1995, p. 108), translation ability (Lowe, 1987, p. 57; Stansfield et al., 1992), translation skills (Lowe, 1987, p. 57) and translation expertise (Gile, 1995, p. 4).

6. Lack of empirical studies. Empirical-experimental studies on written translation began towards the end of the 1980s and were developed in the 1990s. But rather than focusing on a holistic approach to TC, they deal with partial elements: linguistic knowledge of the translator, extra-linguistic knowledge, abilities and aptitudes such as creativity and emotivity, attention, the role of documentation, strategies used, etc.

Orozco (2000, p. 113) points out that the study by Stansfield et al. (1992) is in fact the only effective attempt to operationalize TC, in their terms “translation ability”. This research was commissioned by the FBI to create an instrument for determining the TC level of candidates applying for posts as translators. This was known as the “Spanish into English Verbatim Translation Exam” (SEVTE) and was subjected to validity and reliability tests. However, the authors themselves point out that the results cannot be used to make generalizations, given the small sample group used (seven FBI employees). In addition, Orozco (2000, p. 116) raises two objections to this instrument: there is no definition of TC, and so there is no way of knowing whether it manages to measure what they wanted to measure; and the instrument itself, since at no point were the subjects required to translate complete texts; rather, they were given words or segments from phrases, or phrases or paragraphs.
22.2.2 Consolidation of research on translation competence

Moving forward to the new millennium, the number of studies on TC increases considerably and now plays a more important role in Translation Studies research, so TC is established as the object of specific studies. A significant publication is *Developing translation competence* (edited by Schäffner & Adab, 2000).

During this period, the approach is to consider TC as basically procedural knowledge (abilities, skills and strategies) and the importance of the strategic component. It is at this point that we see early attempts to establish differences between TC and translation expertise. A more interdisciplinary framework was established, since many of the proposals were based on research carried out in other disciplines. Furthermore, empirical validations were being designed.

22.2.2.1 Revisiting previous models

Neubert (2000) developed his 1994 proposal underlining the complexity and heterogeneity of TC, pointing out that TC comprises seven main characteristics:

1. **Complexity**—translation is a complex activity and differs from the rest of the language-related professions.
2. **Heterogeneity**—it implies developing abilities which are very disparate.
3. **Approximation**—the impossibility of knowing all the thematic fields that can be translated and the need to have recourse to other disciplines.
4. **Open-endedness**—the constant demand to be up to date.
5. **Creativity**—to solve certain translation problems.
6. **Situationality**—to adapt to new translation situations (purpose, commissions).
7. **Historicity**—capacity to change, to be able to adapt oneself to other ways of focusing the translation, given space–time changes.

Neubert highlights that in order to accomplish this complex task, translators need expertise that distinguishes them from other language users (2000, p. 5). He establishes five parameters that make up TC: language competence, textual competence, subject competence, cultural competence and transfer competence. As he had already pointed out in his 1994 proposal, transfer competence is the competence which distinguishes translation from any other communicative activity.

Pym (2003) likewise reconsiders the question of TC. He states that proposals since the 1970s had approached TC from four perspectives: as some mode of bilingualism, subject to linguistic analysis; as a result of market demands, subject to social and historical changes; as a multi-component competence, comprising linguistic, cultural, technological and professional skills; and...
as a vague super-competence which transcends the other components. Pym is critical of the componential models of TC and advocates a minimalist concept based on producing and then eliminating alternatives. This draws on his earlier proposal in 1991: (1) the ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT1, TT2 … TTn) for a pertinent source text, and (2) the ability to choose only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence (2003, p. 489).

Results from PACTE’s exploratory studies (PACTE, 2002, 2003) with six professional translators resulted in modifications to the first version of the group’s TC model. Changes in the model have a bearing on the sub-competences that make up TC; furthermore, the sub-competences are defined in terms of declarative and procedural knowledge to indicate their predominance in each sub-competence. As a result, PACTE (2003) adjusted the definition of the sub-competences as follows:

(1) Bilingual sub-competence. Predominantly procedural knowledge required to communicate in two languages (pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge).

(2) Extra-linguistic sub-competence. Predominantly declarative knowledge about the world in general and field specific (bicultural knowledge, encyclopaedic knowledge and subject knowledge).

(3) Knowledge of translation sub-competence. Predominantly declarative knowledge about what translation is and knowledge about the profession.

(4) Instrumental sub-competence. Predominantly procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation resources and information and communication technologies applied to translation.

(5) Strategic sub-competence. Procedural knowledge to guarantee the efficiency of the translation process and solve problems encountered. This is an essential sub-competence that affects all the others, since it creates links between the different sub-competences as it controls the translation process.

(6) Psycho-physiological components. Different types of cognitive and psycho-attitudinal components and mechanisms. They include cognitive components, such as memory, perception, attention and emotion; and attitudinal aspects, such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, critical spirit, knowledge about and confidence in one’s own abilities, the capacity to measure one’s own abilities, motivation, etc.

22.2.2.2 Different approaches
The majority of the proposed models during this period are componential and deal with TC from different perspectives.

22.2.2.2.1 Didactic approach
From a didactic viewpoint, Kelly (2002, 2005, 2007) offers an integral approach to TC for curriculum design. Kelly (2005, p. 162) defines TC as the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes which a translator possesses in order to undertake professional activity in the field. She describes the components of TC (2005, pp. 32–33) as (1) communicative and textual competence in at least two languages and cultures; (2) cultural and intercultural competence; (3) subject area competence, i.e. basic knowledge of subject areas the future translator will/may work in; (4) professional and instrumental competence, i.e. the use of all manner of documentary resources, use of IT tools for professional practice, basic notions for managing professional activity, etc.; (5) attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence (self-concept, self-confidence, initiative, etc.); (6) interpersonal competence; and (7) strategic competence, i.e. organization and planning skills, problem identification.
and problem solving, monitoring, self-assessment and revision. The specificity of her proposal lies in introducing interpersonal competence as a separate competence: ability to work with other professionals and actors involved in the translation process, including teamwork, negotiation and leadership skills. Kelly (2002, p. 15) graphically illustrates her proposal by laying out the sub-competences that make up TC in the form of a pyramid model and emphasizing the role of the strategic sub-competence, located at the tip of the pyramid.

González Davies and Scott-Tennent (González Davies, 2004, pp. 74–75; González Davies & Scott-Tennent, 2005, p. 162) propose six aspects a translator should know: language work (source language/s and target language/s), subject matter (encyclopaedic knowledge related to different disciplines), translation skills (problem spotting and problem solving, creativity, self-confidence, etc.), resourcing skills (paper, electronic and human), computer skills and professional skills (translator’s rights, contracts, etc.).

Katan (2008) puts forward a multi-component list of competences (2008, pp. 133–135) that can be employed in teaching specialized translation, based on previous proposals (PACTE, 2003; Pym, 2003; Schäffner, 2004). His proposal concerns two major blocks: lingua culture-specific competences and translation competences. The lingua and culture competences include competences related to textual competence (comprehension in the source language and production in the target language) and extra-linguistic competence (bicultural knowledge and knowledge of specialized topics). Translation competences include those related to general transfer/mediation competence (knowledge of the theories of translation, the ability to decide on a translation strategy, etc.); strategic transfer/mediation competence (special language related to specialist topics and linguistic/literary devices as compensation strategies, rhetorical strategies, etc.); instrumental/professional competence (knowledge and skills relating to professional translation practice); and attitudinal competence (flexibility, creativity, etc.).

In 2009, the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) established a translator competence profile framework and set out the competences translators need in order to work successfully in the professional translation market. It distinguishes six types of competences and sets out the corresponding components for each of them: translation service provision competence (interpersonal and production dimension); language competence (L1 and one’s other working languages); intercultural competence (socio-linguistic and textual dimension in the comparison of and contrast between discursive practices in L1, L2 and L3); information mining competence; thematic competence; and technological competence (mastery of tools). In 2017, the model was revised and the following competences were proposed: language and culture (transcultural and socio-linguistic awareness and communicative skills); translation (strategic, methodological and thematic competence); technology (tools and applications); personal and interpersonal; and service provision.

The PACTE model (2003; see above) is also composed from a didactic perspective.

22.2.2.2 Relevance-theoretic approach

Gutt (2000), from a relevance-theoretic perspective of translation, defends a competence-oriented research of translation (CORT). The aim of CORT is to understand and explicate the mental faculties that enable human beings to translate in the sense of expressing in one language what has been expressed in another.

Also, from the relevance-theoretic perspective, and taking into consideration proposals from connectionist approaches, Gonçalves (2003, 2005) and Alves and Gonçalves (2007) differentiate between general translator competence and specific translator competence. General translator competence is defined as all knowledge, abilities and strategies a successful translator masters and which lead to adequate translation task performance. Specific translator competence, however,
operates in coordination with other sub-competences and works mainly through conscious or metacognitive processes, being directly geared to the maximization of “interpretive resemblance”.

22.2.2.2.3 Expertise studies approach
Shreve (2006) believes TC should be analysed within the scope of Expertise Studies. He focuses on TC as translation expertise and defines it as the multiple translation-relevant cognitive resources to perform a translation task (2006, p. 28). Shreve proposes that this competence could be seen as declarative and procedural knowledge from a variety of cognitive domains accumulated through training and experience and then stored and organized in a translator’s long-term memory (2006, p. 28).

Shreve (2006, p. 40) maintains that an expertise-oriented model could assume that “knowing how to translate” implies having access to (1) L1 and L2 linguistic knowledge; (2) culture knowledge of the source and target culture, including knowledge of specialized subject domains; (3) textual knowledge of source and target textual conventions; and (4) translation knowledge—knowledge of how to translate using strategies and procedures including tools and information-seeking strategies. These four cognitive areas have to be integrated to satisfactorily complete the translation task. He adds that identifying these four sub-competences implies that translation expertise can be developed differently according to variations in how further experience in the domain of practice is acquired. He concludes that translation expertise is not “a homogeneous, easily describable set of uniform cognitive resources achieved by all translation experts” (Shreve, 2006, p. 40).

Göpferich (2008, p. 155) argues along the lines of expertise research and works from the PACTE model (2003), albeit with some modifications. Göpferich (2009) proposes a TC model as a point of reference for the TransComp project (a process-oriented longitudinal study that explores the development of TC). She distinguishes the following six sub-competences (Göpferich, 2009, pp. 21–23): communicative competence in at least two languages, which corresponds to PACTE’s bilingual sub-competence; domain competence, which corresponds approximately to PACTE’s extra-linguistic sub-competence; tools and research competence, which corresponds to PACTE’s instrumental sub-competence; translation routine activation competence, which comprises the knowledge and the abilities to recall and apply certain (standard) transfer operations (or shifts), which frequently lead to acceptable target-language equivalents (corresponding to the ability to activate productive micro-strategies proposed by Hönig, 1991, 1995); psychomotor competence, which is the psychomotor abilities required for reading and writing (with electronic tools); and strategic competence, which corresponds to the PACTE’s strategic competence and controls the application the other sub-competences.

She points out that employing and controlling sub-competences is determined by three factors: the translation brief and translation norms; the translator’s self-concept/professional ethos; and the translator’s psycho-physical disposition (intelligence, ambition, perseverance, self-confidence, etc.).

22.2.2.2.4 Knowledge management approach
Risku et al. (2010) work from a knowledge management perspective and consider translation as expert knowledge. They pose the need for a new professional translator profile so that translators can take on their role in knowledge management endeavours and generate intellectual capital in the knowledge society. They classify the types of knowledge required of a translator into five categories (Risku et al., 2010, pp. 88–91): language, linguistic and text skills and translation competence; country and cultural knowledge; general and subject matter knowledge; client and business knowledge; and information technology and computer skills.
They assign a series of factors for each category to investigate the extent to which these types of knowledge are, or are not, codifiable and identify appropriate knowledge management tools and instruments: codifiable aspects (e.g. grammar and technology); knowledge management instruments for codifiable aspects (e.g. glossaries and translation memories); non-codifiable aspects (e.g. tacit understanding of context and variations in meaning); and Knowledge Management instruments for non-codifiable aspects (e.g. mailing lists and online communities).

22.2.2.2.5 Professional and behavioural approach
Gouadec, in various studies, has examined translation from the professional viewpoint (see, for example, 2002, 2005, 2007). He points out the following prerequisites and conditions for a good translator (Gouadec, 2007, p. 150): absolutely perfect mastery of the languages used, especially the target language; multicultural competence (in the broad sense, including technical culture, business culture, corporate culture, etc.); perfect familiarity with the domains they specialize in; absolute knowledge of what translation means, what it requires and what it implies; and doing the job as professionally as possible.

The behavioural approach has also been used in some TC studies, although it has had little impact to date. Rothe-Neves (2005) put forward an empirical proposal based on the behavioural approach first introduced by McClelland (1973), with the aim of designing a model of competences for the translation profession (with its various areas of specialization) based on systematic observation of translators who perform well.

Surveys have also been carried out about which competences a good translator or interpreter requires according to their professional profile to satisfy the professional demands, and offers a repertoire of competences. For example, Mackenzie (2000) presents the results of the Practical Orientation of Studies in Translation and Interpreting (POSI) project carried out in Finland, aimed at users and providers of translation services; another example is Calvo Encinas (2004), who focuses on the profile of the community interpreter (carried out in the province of Toledo, Spain).

22.2.2.3 Key features of this period
As we have seen, with the crossing over to the 21st century, research into the functioning of TC is taking on greater importance in Translation Studies. There are various proposals concerning this, and various analysis perspectives. The following is a summary of the main characteristics of this period (Table 22.2):

1. Range of approaches. TC models have been designed with various aims in mind: to be used in curriculum design; with a view to performance in the job market; and with theoretical objectives to discover the function of the competences required of, and which identify, a translator. Most propose similar components for TC; however, they differ in their approach, the terminology used, and the distribution and importance given to these components. This disparity of criteria, however, serves to stress how complex it is to describe TC and the variety of sub-components it comprises.

    The majority of these models are cognitive in nature, but there are also some based on a behavioural approach. Both approaches to studying TC (what it is needed to “know how to do” to be a translator and what the translators “do”) are complementary when it comes to describing the workings of TC.

2. The importance of the procedural component and of strategic competence. As opposed to the earlier period, the majority of models concern the procedural nature of TC and include strategic competence as an essential component to be able to resolve translation problems.
3. Linking the study of TC with expertise studies and establishing the difference between TC and translation expertise. As was the case during the previous period, some authors relate TC to translation expertise (Göpferich, 2008, 2009; Shreve, 2006), establishing links between studies into TC and expertise studies. However, in this period, advances are made in establishing the features that characterize translation expertise and how they differ from TC. By way of example, PACTE carried out an additional study with the best translators from the sample in their experiment on TC. This further study (PACTE, 2017) clearly demonstrated that the results from this group, in the majority of indicators, were higher than among the rest of the translators. Features in this group were also found which, according to Expertise Studies, characterize experts and can serve as a basis to differentiate between TC and translation expertise (PACTE, 2017, pp. 293–294): superior performance; qualitative differences in the representation of knowledge; more highly developed structuring and interconnection of knowledge; more highly developed procedural knowledge; and more efficient use of documentation strategies.

4. The beginnings of empirical validation. It should be pointed out that the majority of the models proposed for TC have not been validated empirically, although there are a few cases of empirical research developed with this objective (Alves & Gonçalves, 2007; Gonçalves, 2003, 2005; PACTE, 2000, 2003).

PACTE carried out an exploratory study on TC (PACTE, 2002, 2003) with six professional translators, a pilot study with three professional translators and three foreign language teachers (PACTE, 2005a, 2005b) and, finally, an experiment with 35 professional translators and 24 foreign language teachers comparing their performance (Hurtado, 2017b). The results of this study validated the proposed TC model.

The TC model proposed by Gonçalves (2003, 2005) and Alves and Gonçalves (2007) is assessed in various empirical studies carried out by these authors with a range of subject types: four students of English, eight translation students and four professional translators (Gonçalves, 2003, 2005); 16 translation students (Alves & Gonçalves, 2003); 17 translation students (Alves & Magalhães, 2004); three professional translators (Alves, 2005a); and four professional translators (Alves, 2005b).

### 22.2.3 Essential characteristics of translation competence

The proposed models and emerging empirical research leave us with the following noteworthy essential TC characteristics.
- TC is a collection of knowledge, abilities and attitudes necessary in order to translate. It comprises declarative and operative knowledge, and is essentially operative knowledge, since it integrates the abilities to perform translation tasks.
- TC is comprised of a set of interrelated sub-competences: linguistic competence in at least two languages; extra-linguistic competence (encyclopaedic, cultural and thematic knowledge); knowledge of translation competence (principles which govern translation and professional aspects); instrumental competence (use of all kinds of documentary sources and information and communication technologies applied to translation); and strategic competence.
- Strategic competence plays a fundamental role in being able to guarantee the translation process efficacy and solve translation problems appropriately.
- TC affects the development of the translation process and its product (the quality of translations).
- There are differences in the functioning of TC depending on directionality (into L1 or L2) and the area of translation specialization in question (legal, technical, scientific, literary, audiovisual, localization, etc.), as well as differences of an individual nature.
- TC is an acquired competence, which is different from bilingual competence.

22.3 Translation competence acquisition

As some authors point out (Campbell, 1998, p. 18; Waddington, 2000, p. 135) no TC model would be complete without taking into consideration the process by which it is acquired; hence the need to also research the process of translation competence acquisition (TCA).

22.3.1 Models of translation competence acquisition

As opposed to the case for TC, there are few TCA model proposals.

22.3.1.1 Harris’ natural translation

Harris (1973, 1977, 1980) and Harris and Sherwood (1978) point out that there is a “natural translation” ability, an innate ability of a universal nature, which all bilinguals have. Harris (1977) defines natural translation as translations by bilinguals (with no special training for this) in daily circumstances. Working from empirical studies, Harris and Sherwood (1978) demonstrate that natural translation is an innate ability, which appears at a very early age and which develops from a stage that they call “pre-translation” to a “semi-professional” stage.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Toury (1986, 1995) and Presas (2000), this ability does not necessarily lead to TC. Toury (1986) adds that TC does not develop automatically and in parallel to natural bilingualism; a translator has to create a second competence in addition to linguistic competence, namely transfer competence, which requires transferring texts, implying knowledge structures that are not part of bilingualism. Presas (2000), in turn, contrasts the notion of a “natural translator” with that of a “trained translator”, stressing that this natural translation ability is not enough to be a translator.

22.3.1.2 Toury’s socialization of translation

Toury (1980, 1995) puts forward the concept of “native translator”, a complementary notion to that of “native speaker” from the field of linguistics, which he defines as a person who has progressively accessed translation without any formal instruction.

Toury (1995, pp. 241–258) proposes a model of the process through which someone who is bilingual becomes a translator, which he calls “socialization as concerns translating”. He proposes
that the act of translating is always communicative production and hence, an interactive act in which environmental feedback plays a fundamental role. This feedback the translator receives is essentially normative and can be in the form of a “sanction” (if they have translated badly) or reward (the agent or receiver expresses their satisfaction with the translation). This happens particularly in the initial stages, since the novice translator is discovering how the social environment works and is not sure of what is expected from him/her or the criteria to judge the appropriateness of a range of translation solutions or use of alternative strategies. The translator later develops an internal control mechanism, which operates during the translation act. The more advanced the TC of the individual, the more s/he can begin to take potential responses to the normative pressure without the risk of being penalized; from this point on, a translator can not only contravene the established rules but can even bring about changes to them.

Toury points out that during this socialization process of translation, the translator is assimilating the feedback and, consequently, modifies her/his basic TC. Seen from this perspective, TC is, in each of the translator’s phases of development, a mix of innate, assimilated and social mechanisms.

Another hypothesis proposed by Toury is that the greater the variety of translation situations encountered, the greater the range and flexibility of individual ability to perform in a socially adequate manner. So, what is acquired is “adaptability”. He adds that “specialization” can conflict with the individual’s adaptability, lowering their overall TC.

22.3.1.3 Shreve: From natural to constructed translation. The expertise trajectory
Shreve (1997) sees TC as a specialization of communicative competence, which not everyone has (unlike communicative competence); from this viewpoint, TC is not an innate ability.

For Shreve, TC develops along a continuum between “natural translation” and “constructed translation” (professional translation). However, this development is not automatic or linear, nor is there an established path. Shreve talks of a “three-dimensional polygon”, which embraces the different translation forms and functions, translation experience and translation situations.

In the development of TC two types of variation can come about: (1) due to individual cognitive styles and (2) due to translation acquisition history (through teaching, mentoring from another translator or autonomously).

According to this author, the development of TC means changes in the nature of the translation process and the norms that govern translation. Thus, there are differences between the “natural translator” and the “professional translator”. The natural translator produces culturally and stylistically inappropriate translations, translates in micro-units without taking into account questions of coherence and cohesion, and does not bear in mind the end purpose of the translation; lexicon takes precedence over other aspects, etc. Shreve stresses the influence exerted by the nature, level and frequency of translation tasks in the history of TCA; moreover, according to Shreve, this restructuring movement of TC does not happen if there are no changes in the translation tasks.

In a later study, Shreve (2006) relates TCA to the notion of the “expertise trajectory” (Lajoie, 2003). Shreve proposes that declarative knowledge (i.e. what is known about the task) is converted, with practice, into production rules leading to proceduralization and, therefore, less effortful processing and greater automaticity. Shreve argues that TCA can be developed differentially, depending on variations in how further practical experience is acquired.

22.3.1.4 Chesterman’s five stages of translation expertise
Chesterman (1997), in turn, refers to the five stages that Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) identify in the acquisition of any skill.9
Stage one: “novice”. Recognition of predefined features and rules. The trainees learn to recognize objective facts and predefined relevant features, and acquire rules to determine actions related to these facts and features.

Stage two: “advanced beginner”. Recognition of non-defined but relevant features. The trainees begin to recognize features that are difficult to define (or are undefined), although relevant. Increased experience and level of recognition.

Stage three: “competence”. Hierarchical and goal-oriented decision making. Having more experience and greater recognition, it is necessary to develop a sense of priorities, that is, hierarchical decision-making procedures; at this stage they follow conscious rules, information is processed and decisions taken.

Stage four: “proficiency”. Intuitive understanding plus deliberative action. Decisions are taken more on the basis of personal experience and, to a lesser degree, following conscious rules; this is an intuitive understanding and also rational action.

Stage five: “expertise”. Fluid performance plus deliberative rationality. Involves acting fluently and deliberately; intuition takes priority and conscience becomes apparent in critical reflections on intuition.

Chesterman defines this development as a gradual process of automatization, which runs “from atomistic to holistic recognition, from conscious to unconscious responses, from analytical to intuitive decision-making, from calculative to deliberative rationality, from detached to involved commitment” (Chesterman, 1997, p. 150).

Chesterman states that the degree of deliberative rationality varies depending on the translation task (poetry, certificates, etc.), and that a trait of the expert translator is probably her/his ability to judge when this is needed and how to use it.

22.3.1.5 The PACTE dynamic and spiral model

PACTE (2000, 2014, 2015, 2019a; Hurtado, in press) conceives TCA as a spiral, non-linear process by which novice knowledge (Pre-TC) evolves into TC. According to the PACTE model, TCA is (1) a dynamic, spiral process that, like all learning processes, evolves from novice knowledge (pre-TC) to TC; (2) a process of restructuring and developing TC sub-competences; (3) a process in which both declarative and procedural types of knowledge are integrated, developed and restructured; (4) a process in which the development of procedural knowledge—and, consequently, the strategic sub-competence—is essential.

So, for PACTE, this is a process of developing from an initial stage (which only has bilingual and extra-linguistic competences and a rudimentary ability of natural translation) to the stage of TC.

According to PACTE, the sub-competences that play a part in the process (1) are interrelated and compensate for each other; (2) do not always develop in parallel (i.e. at the same time and rate); and (3) may vary depending on the translation direction (towards L1 or L2), language pairs, translation specialization (legal, technical, literary, etc.), learning context (formal training, self-learning, etc.) and teaching methodology used. There are also differences at the individual level (knowledge, abilities, cognitive styles, etc.).

22.3.1.6 Alves and Gonçalves’ relevance-theoretic model

Alves and Gonçalves (2007) work from connectionist approaches and see the acquisition of TC as a gradual, systematic and recursive process of expanding neural networks between various units of the individual cognitive environment. Rather than a TCA model, they pose a scale of evolution. Working from empirical studies, they distinguish between two cognitive profiles, which would point to differentiating between translators with lower or higher levels of metacognitive activity:
- “Narrow-band translators”—those who mainly work on the basis of insufficiently contextualized cues (i.e., dictionary-based meaning of words instead of contextualized meaning) and fail to bridge the gap between procedurally, conceptually and contextually encoded information.
- “Broadband translators”—those who mainly tend to work on the basis of communicative cues provided by the ST and reinforced by the contextual assumptions derived from their cognitive environments. In this way, expert translators are able to integrate procedurally, conceptually and contextually encoded information into a coherent whole to encompass higher levels of metacognition.

### 22.3.1.7 Kiraly’s four-dimensional model of the emergence of translator competence

Kiraly (2013, 2015) criticizes the two-dimensional TC models, as they are unable to capture the complexity involved. He proposes a three-dimensional TC model, to which he adds the time factor to turn it into a four-dimensional model of the emergence (rather than acquisition) of translator competence.

Kiraly’s model reflects the complex interplay of competences and their non-parallel emergence over time, and represents uniqueness in that each individual’s competence development is different. In his emergence model, the author describes TC as a complex network and sub-competences as sub-networks; however, he refuses to propose a list of specific sub-competences and justifies this by arguing that there is no consensus on which ones actually exist. He does underline the fact that a range of aspects influence the competence acquisition process, which is in constant evolution. Among these aspects are the translation tasks and projects in which the translator engages and which he or she learns from, their personal and interpersonal attitude towards translating, human and material resources available and employed, and also the influence of the learning environment (Kiraly, 2013, p. 212). The translator’s disposition for learning, abstracting from experience, using language in a creative manner, adapting to norms, etc. are also included among the influential elements which can have a bearing on TCA and make every process unique.

In Kiraly’s model, each sub-competence would appear near the lower (novice) level as a separate dynamic vortex but show complex links throughout the system towards the upper (expert) end of the model due to experience and learning, including learning from interpersonal interaction. Finally, the separate sub-competences merge into a highly integrated and mainly intuitive super-competence (Kiraly, 2015, p. 29).

### 22.3.2 Empirical studies on translation competence acquisition

Since the 1980s there has been a wide range of empirical studies, the majority with small samples, into questions related to TCA. They focus on translation students at the same or different levels, or compare the performance of translation students with bilinguals or, for the main part, with professional translators. These studies deal with topics such as creativity, automatization processes, the process of comprehension, identifying problems, decision-making processes, using strategies, cultural competence, documenting sources, the influence of bilingualism, etc. The following studies are noteworthy as regards large sample groups:

- Séguinot (1991), which analyses a total of 195 students of specialized translation, who were tested at the beginning and end of each year. This study focuses on analysing translation strategies, comparing the difference between native and L2 strategies.
- Orozco (2000) and Orozco and Hurtado (2002) on developing instruments to measure the TCA process in written translation, which draws on a sample group of 235 first-year students from three Spanish universities.
- Lachat Leal (2003), which concerns the impact of experience and learning in the process of problem solving and using strategies. This was carried out on a sample group of 111 second-year undergraduate students, 98 fourth-year students—translation students in both cases—and 12 professional translators.
- Gregorio Cano (2014), which analyses the development of strategic competence for resolving problems of a cultural nature, with 1,046 undergraduate translation students from five Spanish faculties of translation and interpreting: 655 first-year students and 391 fourth-year students. It includes a longitudinal study with 37 students who were given the same test in their first and fourth years.
- Quinci (2014), who carried out a longitudinal study over three years with 53 undergraduate and master’s students of translation (one group of BA students and two of MA students). This study also includes ten professional translators. The aim of this study is to observe whether different levels of competence reflect on different linguistic patterns.
- Massana-Roselló (2016), who performed an experimental study on TCA as regards resolving false friends (Portuguese–Spanish) with 30 undergraduate translation students from the second, third and fourth year at two Spanish universities and ten professional translators.
- Olalla-Soler (2017), who performed an experimental study on the acquisition of translator cultural competence with a sample group of 38 undergraduate translation students taking German as a second foreign language in the BA in Translation and Interpreting from the first, second, third and fourth years and ten professional translators.

However, these studies deal with partial aspects of TCA, and research into comprehensive monitoring of TCA as a whole is in short supply. Only three of the TCA proposed models have incorporated empirical validation. Harris and Sherwood (1978) base their analysis of how “natural translation” functions on data taken from studies of bilinguals (some of which are longitudinal) from birth to the age of 18, carried out in the US. Alves & Gonçalves (2007), in turn, work from empirical studies with translation students and professional translators (see Alves, 2005a, 2005b; Alves & Gonçalves, 2003; Alves & Magalhães, 2004) for their proposal of two TC profiles: narrow-band translators and broadband translators. PACTE (2014, 2015, 2019a; Hurtado, in press) carried out a study with 130 undergraduate students in translation and interpreting from the first, second, third and fourth year and those recently graduated (approximately 30 subjects from each of these groups). The results are compared with the group of translators from the TC experiment. The results have enabled four types of “evolution” to be identified, which vary according to the various competences (PACTE, 2019a, in press): (1) non-evolution—no difference in the values between successive groups between the first year and the end of training; (2) rising evolution—values rise between the first year and the end of training, with each value between successive groups being higher than or equal to the previous one; (3) falling evolution—values fall between the first year and the end of training, with each value between successive groups being lower than or equal to the previous one; and (4) mixed evolution—a combination of rising and falling evolution between the first year and the end of training.

There are two noteworthy research projects that have carried out longitudinal studies on TCA:

- The TransComp project (2008–2011, University of Graz) monitored the performance of 12 students of translation over a period of three years and compared it with the performance of ten professional translators (see Göpferich, 2009).
The Capturing Translation Processes (CTP) project (2009–2011, ZHAW Institute of Translation and Interpreting), which compared translation students at various stages in their training (194 beginners and 112 advanced students) and 39 professional translators (see Ehrensberger-Dow, 2013; Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2013; Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011).

Of another nature is the NACT project from the PACTE research group on Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Translation (PACTE, 2018, 2019b), which aimed at drawing up a proposal for level descriptors that would be a first step in the direction of developing a common European framework in the academic and professional area of translation.

### 22.3.3 Essential characteristics of translation competence acquisition

The proposed models and empirical studies underscore the following essential characteristics of TCA.

- **TCA is a cyclical process.** As we have seen, all the models that have been put forward point out that TC is not an innate competence but rather, is acquired, and this acquisition is a cyclical process from an initial stage to a stage of consolidating competences. Given that it is a cyclical process, we can surmise that there are different TCA phases. We are, however, lacking in empirical information about what these different acquisition phases are and how they work.

- **TCA is a process in which TC sub-competences are developed and restructured.**

- **TCA is a process in which it is essential to develop procedural knowledge and strategic competence in order to make progress in one’s capacity to solve translation problems.**

- **TCA implies a gradual process of automatization.** Some authors (Alves and Gonçalves, Chesterman, PACTE and Shreve) assimilate this acquisition process with the process of acquiring any knowledge and underline the gradual process of proceduralization and automatization.

- **TCA involves a different process depending on the sub-competence.** The results of PACTE’s empirical research have demonstrated that not all sub-competences are developed in parallel, and there are different types of development depending on the case (non-evolution, rising evolution, falling evolution or mixed evolution).

- **TCA is not a linear process.** Some authors (Kiraly, PACTE and Shreve) give importance to the fact that, given the complexity of the TCA process, it does not develop in a linear fashion. The mixed evolution identified by PACTE in their TCA experiment serves as an illustrative example.

- **TCA affects the translation process and its product, bringing about an evolution as regards the functioning of the translation process and as regards the quality of translations.**

- **There are variations in the TCA process.** Some models (PACTE, Shreve and Kiraly) stress that TCA is a complex process in which we can find different types of variations: according to the way it is acquired (naturally and self-taught, guided by means of teaching-learning); according to the pedagogical context; according to directionality (towards L1 or L2); or according to professional profile (legal, technical, literary translator, etc.). And, of course, there are also variations at an individual level depending on the characteristics of each subject.
22.4 Research perspectives

22.4.1 Difficulties related to research on translation competence and translation competence acquisition

In 1998, Campbell had proposed some requirements for a TC model: (1) to show whether TC is divisible into components, and, if so, to describe those components and their relationships; (2) to describe the developmental pathway taken in learning how to translate; and (3) to include means for describing the differences between the performance of different translators (Campbell, 1998, p. 18). Waddington (2000) expresses himself along similar lines when discussing the problems involved in drawing up TC models: (1) it is difficult to know the number of components and to clearly identify them and the relationship between them; (2) a model that has been developed for one given level of competence is not necessarily valid for another; and (3) the competence model is therefore incomplete without a competence development model (Waddington, 2000, p. 135). Both, thus, agree on underlining the difficulties involved in describing TC and the need to describe the TCA process.

Advances have been made in recent decades as regards describing TC and TCA. Furthermore, major advances have been made in empirical research from the field of Translation Studies, and attempts have been made to deal with partial aspects of TC and TCA. However, most of the proposed TC and TCA models have not been validated empirically. This shortage of empirical research into TC and TCA as a whole could be due to various reasons:

(1) The complex nature of TC and TCA and the complexity of the relationship of their components. It should first be pointed out that research into TC is problematic because of its inherently complex nature, given the wide range of cognitive areas and activities involved and the complexity of the corresponding relationships.

(2) The procedural and automatized nature of TC and TCA. Proceduralization and automatization, characteristics that affect both the functioning of TC as well as its acquisition, make it difficult to analyse them, since procedural knowledge is more difficult to verbalize and observe.

(3) The heterogeneous nature of TC and TCA is another aspect that poses problems to research, since this implies a very diverse range of abilities, which in addition can vary depending on the subject.

(4) The diversification of TC and TCA. How TC functions and the relationships between its components are particularly difficult to observe, given the differences depending on the individual characteristics of the subjects (knowledge, experience, cognitive styles, etc.) and the way TC is acquired (guided, via teaching-learning; autonomously, through practice outside the teaching system). There are also differences depending on the translation direction (into L1 or L2). Furthermore, each specialized professional profile has its own specific characteristics.

22.4.2 Need for future advances in research on translation competence and translation competence acquisition

Although much has been achieved, there is still a long way to go in research on TC and TCA. Research should develop along four major lines.

(1) Empirical research on TC and TCA. As we have seen, most of the TC and TCA models have not been validated empirically, and there is a shortage of empirical research on TC and TCA as a whole. These studies should be based on large and representative...
samples so that the results can be generalizable. Furthermore, studies already carried out should be replicated (e.g. those by PACTE on TC and TCA, TransComp on TCA) in different contexts, so that the results can be compared in each case, and we can deduce common and generalizable characteristics. As regards studying TCA, it is important to carry out longitudinal studies, which, by solving the inherent difficulties in performing this kind of study (controlling confounding variables, developing parallel instruments for each measure, subjects dropping out, etc.), are able to control all the possible external influences that could distort results.

(2) Research on the competences acquired in each professional profile and how they are acquired. The majority of studies on TC and TCA refer to generalist translator competences. So, what is lacking is advances in research into the competences required in each professional translation area and the process by which they are acquired: legal, business, financial, technical, scientific, literary, audiovisual, accessibility and localization.

(3) Research on possible variations which can crop up in TC and in TCA. It would be helpful to carry out studies that compare performance depending on translation direction (into L1 and into L2), according to the context (social, pedagogical), according to the language pair and according to the characteristics of the subjects, so that consistencies and differences can be identified.

(4) Establish levels of competences. As opposed to other disciplines, in translation there is no common base for describing levels of competences, as happens, say, in teaching languages. A description of this kind would provide a common framework, which would be of great use in the education and professional sectors of translation. This requires research into the TCA process, with large and representative samples, and also in different contexts in order to better understand the different phases in the TCA process. Furthermore, studies such as the PACTE group NACT project (see Section 22.3.2) would contribute to advances in describing and coming to a common agreement about TC levels.

Notes
1 The term was created by the anthropologist Hymes in 1966 in his paper entitled “On Communicative Competence” (published in 1971).
2 For previous descriptions of the TC model proposals, see Hurtado (2001/2011, pp. 383–392) and Hurtado (2017a, pp. 18–31).
3 Original quotation: “la habilidad de saber traducir”.
4 This model was first presented on the poster “La competencia traductora y su aprendizaje: Objetivos, hipótesis y metodología de un proyecto de investigación” (“Translation competence and how it is learned: objectives, hypothesis and methodology behind a research project”) at the IV International Congress on Translation, held at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 06/05/1998.
5 The EMT (http://ec.europa.eu/EMT) is a European Commission partnership project in conjunction with higher-education institutions that offer translation programmes. The EMT sets out quality standards for translation programmes that meet professional standards and market needs. Approved centres are authorized to use their logo, which is a registered EU trademark.
6 Knowledge management is seen as a discipline that encourages an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, assessing, retrieving and sharing all the information assets of an enterprise, i.e. databases, documents, policies, procedures and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers (Duhon, 1998).
7 Regarding the applications of the behavioural approach in Translation Studies, see Kuznik and Hurtado (2015).
8 Dreyfus and Dreyfus identify five stages but without awarding them a specific denomination; the denominations used here are those proposed by Chesterman for each stage.
9 See Massana-Roselló (2016, pp. 39–67) for a review of empirical studies into TCA up to 2015.
Further reading


This book is a compendium of PACTE Group’s experimental research in translation competence since 1997. The book is organized in four sections: Conceptual and methodological background, Research design and data analysis, Results of the PACTE translation competence experiment and Defining features of translation competence. It also includes eight appendices and a glossary.


References


Translation competence and its acquisition


Translation competence and its acquisition


