AN EMPIRICAL-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

Grupo PACTE
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OVERALL OBJECTIVE
Acquisition of Translation Competence

PHASES
1ª Translation Competence (TC)
2ª Acquisition of Translation Competence (ATC)

RESEARCH
Empirical-experimental
Process and product

6 LANGUAGE COMBINATIONS
STUDIES COMPLETED
Exploratory studies on TC (June 2000-January 2001)
Pilot test on TC (February-April 2004)
Experiment on TC (October 2005-March 2006)

CURRENT PHASE
Analysis of data obtained from the experiment on TC
the underlying system of knowledge required to translate

- Expert knowledge
- Predominantly procedural
- Comprising different related subcompetencies
- Important strategic component
CT MODEL (PACTE 2003)

BILINGUAL

EXTRALINGUISTIC

STRATEGIC

INSTRUMENTAL

KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSLATION

PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS
RESEARCH DESIGN

- Hypothesis
- Independent variable
- Dependent variables
- Material for data collection
- Experimental tasks
- Instruments
The degree of expertise of the translator influences the translation process and the translation product.

‘Expertise’ is defined in terms of:
- years of experience translating
- main source of income: translation
- experience in a variety of fields
Professionals working with foreign languages

- Translators
- Foreign language teachers
Expertise in translation

2 categories:

(+) “expertise”

- Translators with 6 or more years professional experience of translating texts in a variety of fields

(-) “expertise”

- Foreign language teachers with 6 or more years of professional experience, but no experience of translation
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Translation project
- Identification of problems
- Knowledge of translation
- Decision-making
- Efficacy of the process
INDICATORS OF VARIABLES

- Acceptability of results
- Subcompetencies activated
- Nature of the problem identified
- Conceptualization of the problem identified
- Satisfaction of subjects
- Degree of difficulty of the translation
- Coherence of the translation project
- Concept of translation
- Total time taken and time taken at each stage: O, D, R
- Type of action:
  - P, SP, SD, CON simple, CON complex
- Chains of actions:
  - Internal support; predominantly internal support; balance between internal and external support; predominantly external support and external support alone
CATEGORIES OF ACTIONS

P: pause (+ 5 seconds)

SP: provisional solution

SD: definitive solution

CON: consultation
  • SIMPLE: CON – linguistic (grammar and vocabulary), in bilingual and monolingual dictionaries and style books (sources: printed, CD, on-line)
  • COMPLEX: CON - textual, field-specific, conceptual (sources: printed, CD, on-line)
CHAINS OF ACTIONS

COGNITIVE IMPLICATION

Internal support --- External support

Simple Internal Support

Internal Support Dominant

Simple External Support

External Support Dominant
MATERIAL FOR DATA COLLECTION

Texts and translations

Translation protocols (Proxy, Camtasia)

Direct observation

Questionnaires

Interviews
EXPERIMENTAL TASKS

- Direct translation
- Questionnaire on DT problems
- Inverse translation
- Questionnaire on IT problems
- Questionnaire on knowledge of translation
- Retrospective interview
INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaires:
- Initial questionnaires (translators, teachers)
- Translation problems questionnaire
- Knowledge of translation questionnaire
- Interview form

Texts:
- ‘Rich points’
- Criteria for acceptability, semi acceptability and unacceptability of solutions

Tables for data collection
La Plana Novella es una antigua heredad adquirida por el Indiano Pere Domenech i Grau en 1885 que se encuentra en una pequeña planicie en el centro del Parc Natural del Garraf y pertenece al municipio de Olivella. La Finca fue declarada colonia agrícola 10 años más tarde por el gobierno alfonsino, pero de aquella época perdura una leyenda de desenfreno y dilapidación que hizo desaparecer la fortuna del americano. El estilo arquitectónico del Palacete es ecléctico, es decir que mezcla diferentes estilos. La geografía comarcal de Cataluña lo califica de "Castillo de Bambalinas" como si fuese un decorado de teatro. Sin ningún tipo de duda la construcción estilísticamente más original del Palau Novella es el lavadero gaudiniano, pero una de las piezas más características y llamativas del Palau es la comuna, conocida como “la trona".
“… adquirida por el **indiano**” … “que hizo desaparecer la fortuna del **americano**”

Problem TT: Coherence “**indiano**”- “**americano**”. Absence of equivalent term in TT

– Relevant aspects: coherence of the anaphoric/cataphoric reference to the emigrant who returned to Spain having made his fortune in the Americas.

– Acceptability:
CRITERIA OF ACCEPTABILITY

- ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION:
  Activates all the relevant connotations in the ST

- SEMIACCEPTABLE SOLUTION:
  Activates some of the relevant connotations in the ST
  and maintains the coherence of the TT

- UNACCEPTABLE SOLUTION:
  The solution activates none of the relevant connotations
  in the ST, or activates connotations that are not coherent
CRITERIA OF ACCEPTABILITY

THREE PARAMETERS:

- Meaning of the ST
- Function of the TT
- Appropriate language use
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Function TT</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Category</th>
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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Translators with experience in a variety of fields
- Professional experience
- Directionality
TRANSLATORS: Direct translation texts

- Literary
- Opinion
- Non specialised
- Tourist
- Advertising
- Audiovisual
- Commercial
- Economic
- Legal
- Scientific
- Technical
- Other
SAMPLE EXPERIENCE

Years of experience

Translators

Teachers
### Translators’ experience in inverse translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translators</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No inverse translation experience</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some inverse translation experience</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIRST RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TRANSLATION

- Instrument
- Evidence
- Dynamic Index
- Coherence Coefficient
History of the Questionnaire
- 36 items designed around the 7 indicators of the translation knowledge variable: translation, translation competence, translation units, etc.
- Static and dynamic items
  - Static: linguistic and literal concepts
  - Dynamic: textual, communicative and functional concepts

Testing the Questionnaire
Selecting 5 “pairs” of questions that reflect the static/dynamic contrast
PAIR 2: related to translation methods
2.a. Dynamic item: “The way a text is translated will depend on the potential TT reader”. This coincides with my opinion: not at all, a little, quite a lot, totally.
PAIR 2: related to translation methods

2.b. Static item: “The aim of all translations is to produce a TT that is as similar as possible in form to the ST”

This coincides with my opinion: not at all, a little, quite a lot, totally.
Differences between the two groups of subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translators</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
<td>0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>-0.400</td>
<td>0.261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dynamic Index per subject

Mann-Whitney U-test  259.500
Wilcoxon W  559.500
Z-test  - 2.511
Significance  .012

CONCLUSION
The dynamic index of the translators is significantly higher than that of the teachers (at the significance level 5%).
There is no significant difference between the two groups (translators and teachers) in coherence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson C-square</td>
<td>3.028</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood</td>
<td>4.459</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of valid cases</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Results of the Experiment

Efficacy of the Process

- Acceptability
- Total time taken
- Total time taken, time taken at each stage and acceptability
- Total time taken, acceptability and chain of actions.
There are differences between the 15 “best” translators and the 15 “best” teachers.
TIME TAKEN

TOTAL TIME TAKEN

No differences have been observed between the 15 “best” translators and the 15 “best” teachers

TRANSLATORS: 57 minutes (average time taken)
TEACHERS: 53 minutes (average time taken)

TIME TAKEN AT EACH STAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All subjects</th>
<th>“Best” subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOTAL TIME AND ACCEPTABILITY

Positive correlation between acceptability and total time taken (translators and teachers)
No correlation has been observed between acceptability and time taken at each stage.
EFFICACY OF THE PROCESS

- No differences have been observed in the total time taken between the 15 “best” translators and the 15 “best” teachers.

- No correlation has been observed between acceptability and time taken at each stage (Pearson r < 0.07).

- A positive correlation has been observed between acceptability and total time taken by both translators and teachers (Pearson r = 0.90).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 (12 subjects)</th>
<th>2 (12 subjects)</th>
<th>3 (12 subjects)</th>
<th>4 (12 subjects)</th>
<th>5 (11 subjects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability (index)</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time (minutes)</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A difference has been observed in the acceptability index between the subjects in categories 1 and 2 (those who have produced the “best” translations) but no difference has been observed between categories 1 and 2 in relation to the total time taken.

**THE NEXT STEP: INVESTIGATE THE CAUSE**

**CROSS THIS DATA WITH THE DATA FROM OTHER VARIABLES,** e.g., **THE CHAIN OF ACTIONS (Decision making variable)**
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