

# RETHINKING TRANSLATOR'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TRANSLATION STUDIES: A NEW MODEL BASED ON A LITERATURE REVIEW

---

CHRISTIAN OLALLA-SOLER

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA

1. Culture in translation competence (TC) models
2. Translator's intercultural competence (TIC) models
  1. Witte (2000)
  2. Bahumaid (2010)
  3. PICT (2012)
  4. Yarosh (2012)
3. Defining a new translator's intercultural competence model
  1. The concept of culture
  2. The concept of translator's intercultural competence
  3. The components of translator's intercultural competence
4. Modeling translator's intercultural competence
  1. Components
  2. Linking TIC to TC
  3. Validating the model

# CULTURE IN TRANSLATION COMPETENCE (TC) MODELS

---

- ▶ Culture in the cultural or intercultural (sub)competences (CIUTI, n.d.; EMT, 2009; Hansen, 1997; Kelly, 2002, 2005; Nord, 1988).
- ▶ Culture in the linguistic and cultural sub-competence (EMT, 2017) or in the extra-linguistic (sub)competence (Hurtado Albir, 1996; Katan, 2008; PACTE, 2003).
- ▶ Cultural knowledge as part of translation competence (Cao, 1996; Kiraly, 1995; Neubert, 2000; Shreve, 2006).
- ▶ Cultural knowledge as main element included in these models.

---

# **TRANSLATOR'S (INTER)CULTURAL COMPETENCE (TIC) MODELS**

# WITTE (2000)

---

- ▶ Translator's cultural competence

- ▶ The ability to become aware of and check what is 'unconsciously known' and the ability to consciously 'learn' what is 'not known' about one's own and foreign culture(s). It is also the ability to relate these cultures in order to perceive and produce behaviors for the needs of at least two participants from different cultures in a way that is appropriate for the context and purpose of their communication. (Witte, 2000: 163; own translation)

- ▶ Competence-in-cultures: perceptual tendencies and behavioral patterns, attitudes, values, etc., related to the working cultures.

- ▶ Competence-between-cultures: the translator's ability to analyze the previous knowledge of the participants to anticipate behaviors that may be inappropriate.

- ▶ CC as a component of TC. Lack of description of how the competences interact.

- ▶ Lack of empirical validation.

# BAHUMAID (2010)

---

- ▶ Cultural competence
  - ▶ Encyclopedic knowledge of the source and target cultures: 1) knowledge about historical, geographical, political, economic, social, cultural, educational, legal, administrative, etc., facts and 2) aspects of the countries of both the source and target languages.
  - ▶ Cultural awareness: 1) awareness of the relation between language and culture with all its implications for the translator, and 2) awareness of cultural similarities and differences between the cultures of both source and target languages.
  - ▶ Specific translation skills: ) expertise in the translation strategies that should be employed in handling culture-laden texts; 2) acquisition of adequate skills in the rendition of culture-bound terms that occur in various genres and text types, and 3) expertise in the translation procedures that are used in rendering culture-bound terms.
- ▶ Not linked to TC.
- ▶ No reference to the interrelation of the CC components.
- ▶ Lack of empirical validation.

- ▶ Translator's intercultural competence
  - ▶ Theoretical dimension. Core concepts of the theory of intercultural communication, conceptual tools for analyzing the intercultural perspective, knowledge of the cultural context of translation, and being aware of the links between intercultural communication theory and Translation Studies.
  - ▶ Textual dimension. The ability to analyze cultural issues and texts from source and target audiences from a comparative perspective, to recognize problems of non-equivalence and to apply strategies to address them.
  - ▶ Interpersonal dimension. It includes cultural awareness and empathy manifested in social exchange, curiosity and proactiveness, sensitivity to affects and potential conflicts in communication, and social positioning.
  - ▶ Performance scales for each sub-dimension and didactic and assessment materials.
  - ▶ Not linked to TC.
  - ▶ No reference to the interrelation of the TIC components.
  - ▶ Lack of empirical validation.

## ▶ Translator's intercultural competence

- ▶ Interculturally-competent core translation behavior. The translator's behaviors necessary to account for the intercultural nature of all the stages of the translation process.
- ▶ Comparative cultural knowledge. Knowledge on the differences and similarities between the translator's working cultures.
- ▶ Cultural awareness. The awareness that cultures condition the behavior and the way in which members of those cultures perceive the world.
- ▶ Intercultural communication process awareness. The awareness that cultures influence the process of intercultural communication.
- ▶ The learning dimension, level 1. The awareness of the methods that the translator can use to learn about foreign cultures and the habit of developing comparative cultural knowledge.
- ▶ The learning dimension, level 2. The habit of learning about the translator's own culture and of keeping up to date with the reality of relevant cultural groups.
- ▶ Ability to learn autonomously. The ability to develop one's intercultural competence autonomously.
- ▶ Professional identity and values. The motivation and responsibility associated with the translator's role as a professional in an intercultural mediation process.

- ▶ Translator's intercultural competence
  - ▶ Learning objectives linked to performance-level indicators, self-assessment questionnaire, and a performance test.
  - ▶ TIC components are interrelated.
  - ▶ TIC model linked to the EMT TC model, but components of both models overlap or are repeated.
  - ▶ The instruments were validated and the author extended the validation of the instruments to the model, but the theoretical construct was not validated.

---

# DEFINING A NEW TRANSLATOR'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE MODEL

# THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

---

- ▶ Concepts of culture classified according to Faulkner, Baldwin, Lindsley, & Hecht (2006):
  - ▶ Witte: Vermeer (1990) and Göhring (1978) -> functionalist definitions
  - ▶ Bahumaid: Nida (1994) -> structural definition
  - ▶ PICT: Triandis (1994) -> structural definition
  - ▶ Yarosh: Tylor (1871) (structural) + Malinowski (1931) (structural and partially procedural) and Geertz (1973) (structural)
  - ▶ Static conception of culture

# THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

---

▶ Own definition:

Culture is a **dynamic system of values and behavior models** which is **socially acquired, shared** by a group of individuals, and **developed cognitively**. Through this system, a group of individuals **perceives** and **modifies** the natural and artificial world, it develops subsystems for the organization of behavior, of the natural world, of the patrimony, of the societal structures, and of the communicative needs. A culture **constantly evolves** through contact with other cultural systems and because of the changes in the perceived natural world with which it interacts. Culture functions as a **cohesive system** for a group of individuals; it **guides the processes of perception, attribution, interpretation and decision making**, and it favors certain attitudes. It also provides the group of individuals with a **common framework for perceiving, modifying and interpreting the world** and, consequently, for establishing a **shared but individually developed reality** with which each individual develops a **unique and personal relationship** according to his/her own self-concept.

# THE CONCEPT OF TRANSLATOR'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

---

- ▶ Witte is the only author who provides a definition of the concept of translator's intercultural competence.
- ▶ Some authors relate it to translating cultural references (Bahumaid and Witte), while others link it to the translation profession (PICT and Yarosh)
  - ▶ Some of the TIC functions described by PICT and Yarosh are not specific to this competence or are in contradiction with the global translation market.
- ▶ Own model: The translator's capacity to activate, apply and contrast his/her knowledge about the source culture and the target culture in relation to a cultural phenomenon perceived in the source text, in order to achieve an acceptable solution in the target text. The translator's cultural competence is constantly linked to the sub-competences that make up translation competence..

# THE COMPONENTS OF TRANSLATOR'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

---

- ▶ All models include knowledge, abilities, and attitudes.
- ▶ Some components of some models are general intercultural competence components (e.g., cultural awareness in Yarosh's model).
- ▶ Some components overlap with translation competence models (e.g., Yarosh's professional identities and values, or PICT's interpersonal dimension).
- ▶ Yarosh's model includes learning components -> TIC acquisition model?
- ▶ Documentation is not included in any model.

---

# MODELING TRANSLATOR'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

# COMPONENTS

---

- ▶ Cultural knowledge. The possession of knowledge related to the organization of the natural environment, the organization of the cultural patrimony, the organization of the society, organization of language and communication needs, and knowledge on behavior models, values and ideas.
- ▶ Cultural knowledge acquisition skills. The efficient acquisition, storage and retrieval of cultural knowledge using the translator's internal resources (knowledge already acquired and stored) and external resources (documentation sources). Linked to the instrumental sub-competence of translation competence (PACTE 2003, 2017).
- ▶ Culture-related contrastive skill. Contrastive strategies between the source and target cultures regarding a cultural translation problem. It is also linked to the application of cultural knowledge and the implementation of strategies to adequately solve this type of translation problems.
- ▶ Culture-related attitudinal components. Attitudes that foster the understanding between cultures and help to raise awareness of the influence of one's own culture on the perception and interpretation of other cultures: cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, and flexibility (Ang, Van Dyne & Koh 2006; van der Zee & van Oudenhoven 2000).

# LINKING TIC TO TC

---

- ▶ Strategic sub-competence (PACTE 2003; 2017) links TIC to TC.
- ▶ Strategic sub-competence controls the translation process. Its function is: (1) to plan the process and select the most appropriate method to translate; (2) to evaluate the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose; (3) to activate the different sub-competences and compensate for any shortcomings in them; (4) to identify translation problems and apply procedures to solve them.

# VALIDATING THE MODEL

---

- ▶ 1<sup>st</sup> validation phase: a product and process-oriented, cross-sectional, quasi-experimental research with translation students with German as a second foreign language and professional German-Spanish translators. Completed.
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> validation phase: replication of the quasi-experiment with bilingual non-translators, more language pairs, and more pedagogical contexts.

# REFERENCES

---

- ▶ Ang, Soon, Linn van Dyne, and Christine Koh. 2006. "Personality Correlates of the Four-Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence." *Group & Organization Management* 31 (1):100-123.
- ▶ Bahumaid, Showqi. 2010. "Investigating Cultural Competence in English-Arabic Translator Training Programs." *Meta: Journal Des Traducteurs* 55 (3):569-88.
- ▶ Cao, Deborah. 1996. "Towards a Model of Translation Proficiency." *Target* 8 (2):325-40.
- ▶ CIUTI. n.d. "Profile." CIUTI. Accessed April 5, 2017. <http://www.ciuti.org/about-us/profile/>.
- ▶ EMT. 2009. "Competences for Professional Translators, Experts in Multilingual and Multimedia Communication." Directorate-General Translation. 2009. [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key\\_documents/emt\\_competences\\_translators\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf).
- ▶ EMT. 2017. "Competence Framework 2017." 2017. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt\\_competence\\_fw\\_2017\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competence_fw_2017_en_web.pdf).
- ▶ Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- ▶ Göhring, Heinz. 1978. "Interkulturelle Kommunikation: Die Überwindung der Trennung von Fremdsprachen- und Landeskundeunterricht durch einen integrierten Fremdverhaltensunterricht." In *Kongressberichte der 8. Jahrestagung der GAL*, 9-14. Stuttgart.
- ▶ Hansen, Gyde. 1997. "Success in Translation." *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 5 (2):201-10.
- ▶ Hurtado Albir, Amparo. 1996. "La enseñanza de la traducción directa 'general'. Objetivos de aprendizaje y metodología." In *La enseñanza de la traducción [Col. Estudios sobre la traducción 3]*, edited by Amparo Hurtado Albir, 31-55. Castellón de la Plana: Universidad Jaume I.
- ▶ Katan, David. 2008. "University Training, Competencies and the Death of the Translator. Problems in Professionalizing Translation and in the Translation Profession." In *Tradurre: formazione e professione*, edited by Maria Teresa Musacchio and Geneviève Henrot, 113-40. Padova: CLEUP.
- ▶ Kelly, Dorothy. 2002. "Un Modelo de Competencia Traductora: Bases Para El Diseño Curricular." *Puentes*, no. 1:9-20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2>.
- ▶ Kelly, Dorothy. 2005. *A Handbook for Translator Trainers*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- ▶ Kiraly, Donald C. 1995. *Pathways to Translation. Pedagogy and Process*. Kent: The Kent State University Press.
- ▶ Malinowski, Bronisław. 1931. "Culture." *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 4*. The MacMillan Company.

# REFERENCES

---

- ▶ Neubert, Albrecht. 2000. "Competence in Language, in Languages, and in Translation." In *Developing Translation Competence*, edited by Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab, 38:3-18. Benjamins Translation Library. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- ▶ Nida, Eugene A. 1964. *Toward a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- ▶ Nord, Christiane. 1988. *Textanalyse und Übersetzen. Theoretische Grundlagen, Methode und didaktische Anwendung einer übersetzungsrelevanten Textanalyse*. Heidelberg: J. Gross Verlag.
- ▶ PACTE. 2003. "Building a Translation Competence Model." In *Triangulating Translation: Perspectives in Process Oriented Research*, edited by Fábio Alves, 43-66.
- ▶ PACTE. 2017. "PACTE Translation Competence Model. A Holistic, Dynamic Model of Translation Competence." In *Researching Translation Competence by PACTE Group*, edited by Amparo Hurtado Albir, 35-41. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- ▶ PICT. 2012. "Intercultural Competence. Curriculum Framework." 2012. [http://www.pictllp.eu/download/curriculum/PICT-CURRICULUM\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.pictllp.eu/download/curriculum/PICT-CURRICULUM_ENGLISH.pdf).
- ▶ Shreve, Gregory M. 2006. "The Deliberate Practice: Translation and Expertise." *Journal of Translation Studies* 9 (1):27-42.
- ▶ Triandis, Harry C. 1994. *Culture and Social Behavior*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- ▶ Tylor, Edward Burnett. 1871. *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom, Volume 1*. London: John Murray.
- ▶ van der Zee, Karen I., and Jan Pieter van Oudenhoven. 2000. "The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: A Multidimensional Instrument of Multicultural Effectiveness." *European Journal of Personality* 14 (4):291-309.
- ▶ Vermeer, Hans J. 1990. *Skopos und Translationsauftrag - Aufsätze*. Heidelberg: Self-published.
- ▶ Witte, Heidrun. 2000. *Die Kulturkompetenz des Translators*. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag.
- ▶ Yarosh, Maria. 2012. "Translator Intercultural Competence: The Concept and Means to Measure the Competence Development." PhD. Diss. University of Deusto.

Thank you for your attention!



Christian Olalla-Soler



Christian.Olalla@uab.cat



@ChristianOlalla