Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Translation.
The PACTE's NACT project

Translaton I
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Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Poland

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Current research project:

"Nivelación de competencias en la adquisición de la competencia traductora (traducción escrita)"

"Establishing Competence Levels in Translation Competence Acquisition in Written Translation"

2015-2018

Establishing performance levels in translation competence acquisition in written translation

1. To describe the specific competences involved in translation competence acquisition
2. To describe performance levels

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Laying the foundations of a common framework for academic and professional activity in written translation in Eroupe

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Establishing scales of performance level descriptors (progression)

RATIONALE BEHIND PROJECT

- No common framework of performance levels (comparable to the CEFR) in translation

- In the academic field
- Different levels of translator training in universities (undergraduate and master's degrees) and the non-academic arena
- No standard criteria or levels in translator training centres
- No specific training in some countries
- Requirements for academic standardization in the EHEA

- In the professional field
- Different performance and specialization levels in the translation market (professional and non-professional translators of various kinds and at various levels)
- Translation market globalization

- Increasing academic and professional mobility

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European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation (Spanish Language Department)

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH STAGES

Three stages

Production of a first level descriptor proposal

Based on:

1. Data from the results of PACTE's previous experimental research on Translation Competence and Translation Competence Acquisition

2. An analysis of 18 European translator training centres' undergraduate and master's degree programmes: creation of a database

3. Research on descriptor scales (e.g. CEFR)

4. Proposals of competences, done within the professional and translator-training fields

- National Occupational Standards, United Kingdom (2007)
- EMT (2009)
- Vertaalacademie Maastricht (2011, 2016)
- NAATI (2016, currently being revised)
- ATA, ITI

Production of a first level descriptor proposal

Proposal writing process:

- A preliminary description (February 2017)
   ↳ Submitted to the opinion of experts in competence design and establishing competence levels

- A first level descriptor proposal (March 2017)
   ↳ Face-to-face and online discussions with representatives of collaborating institutions

- Revision of the first proposal (June 2017)

Document : *Establishing Competence Levels in Translation. Proposal 1 (Revised) [19/06/2017]*

A three-level scale

▪ **Translation level C:** *specialist professional translator*
Consolidation of areas of specialization in translation: competences corresponding to each professional profile:. Profiles:
         - Legal translation
         - Economic and financial translation
         - Technical translation
         - Scientific translation
         - Literary translation
         - Audiovisual translation (dubbing, subtitling, voice-over)
         - Accessibility (audio description, subtitling for the deaf)
         - Localization (web pages, software, videogames)

▪ **Translation level B:** *generalist professional translator*
Introduction to areas of specialization in translation: basic specialized translation competences

▪**Translation level A: pre-professional translator**
Basic translation competences: introduction to translation

Translation levels A and B: two *sub-levels* (translation A1 and A2; B1 and B2)

Particularity of level C

▪Only described in general terms. The areas of professional specialization have yet to be described.

▪It requires further research.

▶ The levels are accumulative:

an individual at any given level is assumed to have mastered the previous one

TEXT GENRES LIABLE TO BE TRANSLATED

▪ **Translation level C**: <u>specialized</u> texts corresponding to at least one area of professional specialization (legal; economic and financial; scientific; technical; literary; audiovisual; accessibility; localization)

▪ **Translation level B2**: <u>semi-specialized</u> texts (for a non-specialized target audience) corresponding to at least one area of professional practice (legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific; non-literary publishing)

▪ **Translation level B1**: <u>non-specialized</u> texts corresponding to at least one area of professional practice (legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific; non-literary publishing)

▪ **Translation level A2**: <u>non-specialized</u> texts of different types (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) involving problems related to register (tenor, style).

▪ **Translation level A1**: <u>non-specialized</u> texts of different types (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) in standard language.

▶ **Examples of text genres (Annex 1)**

- Language competence
- Cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence
- Instrumental competence
- Translation service provision competence
- Translation problem solving competence

Interact and balance one another out

▶ Transversal element: genres liable to be translated at each level

Reading comprehension in SL and written production in TL

▪ In relation to the genres liable to be translated at each level
▪ With reference to the levels of the CEFR

Example: Translation level A1

1. *Can understand different types of non-specialized source language texts in standard language, to which end a minimum of CEFR reading comprehension level B2 is required*.

2. *Can produce different types of non-specialized target language texts in standard language, to which end a minimum of CEFR written production level C1 is required*.

Mobilization of cultural, world and thematic knowledge:

▪ Own culture and the foreign culture involved
▪ (Universal) world knowledge
▪ Thematic knowledge corresponding to specific fields (Translation level B1 and above)

▶ Examples of cultural and world knowledge (Annex 2)

Use of:
▪ Documentation resources: types of resources and queries (basic/complex)
▪ Technological tools: type of tool and functions (basic/advanced/ specialised)

▶ Examples of technological tools and functions (Annex 3)

Management of aspects related to:
- The workings of the labour market
- Professional practice

The development of this competence largely begins at translation level B1

Types of translation problems liable to be solved at each level

▪ Central category: it determines the competences required at each level ↔ genres an individual should be able to translate at each level

▪ Progression:
• Language interference problems at translation level A1
• Intentionality, introduced at translation level A2
• Thematic problems and problems stemming from professional translation briefs, introduced at translation level B1

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DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES AND PERFORMANCE LEVELS

	Language competence	Cultural, world kowledge and thematic competence	Instrumental competence	Translation service provision competence	Problem-solving competence
Translation level C					
Translation level B2					
Translation level B1					
Translation level A2					
Translation level A1					

1. *Can translate semi-specialized texts corresponding to at least one area of professional practice in situations involving professional translation for a non-specialized target audience, without errors in terms of meaning, in a manner that is linguistically correct and appropriate to the brief, to which end a minimum of CEFR reading comprehension level C1 in the source language and CEFR written production level C2 in the target language is required.*

2. *Can carry out different types of translations according to the brief involved.*

3. *Can solve language interference problems; basic thematic problems; explicit and implicit cultural difference and world knowledge problems; and intentionality problems.*

4. *Can identify and use reliable documentation resources and use technological tools to solve the aforementioned translation problems, and can adapt to new documentation resources and technological tools.*

5. *Can manage aspects of professional practice and the workings of the labour market.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DESCRIPTION

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1. It is intended to be of use to both the academic and professional arenas

2. It is independent of language combinations, directionality (direct/inverse translation), stages of education and professional contexts

3. It does not describe the different areas of professional specialization corresponding to level C. It requires further research

4. The progression established in each descriptive category is accumulative

5. All the descriptive categories are interrelated

6. It describes capabilities to act (*can do*) and not declarative knowledge

7. It does not establish degrees of translation quality for each level

8. It does not establish or describe learning outcomes or learning tasks suited to each level

► We have sought to word the level descriptors clearly, straightforwardly and in such a way as to ensure they are easily observable, to facilitate their use in different academic and professional contexts

Evaluation of proposed level descriptors (based on *expert judgement*)

1. Professional opinions
Representatives of Europe's professional translation sector: generalist translators, professional associations of translators (non-specialized)

2. Academic opinions
Representatives of Europe's academic translation sphere:
curriculum supervisors, teachers of direct and inverse translation at different levels

Evaluation of proposed level descriptors

Three pre-selection questionnaires (translators, associations, teachers)

Figures:

- Associations of professional translators: 15 representatives
- Translators: 77
- Teachers: 91

Final sample:

- Associations of professional translators: 11 representatives
- Translators: 23
- Teachers: 65

TOTAL: 99 experts

Evaluation of proposed level descriptors

A questionnaire for the evaluation of the proposed descriptors (November 2017 – January 2018)

PART I: Questions about the proposal's characteristics
- the appropriateness of the proposed categories and levels and their names
- the suitability of the use of text genres and their progression
- name and contents of level C

PART II: Evaluation of each competence's proposed descriptors
- suitability of each competence's descriptors
- their clearness
- their appropriateness to their level
+ assess the three annexes

PART III: Global scale
- suitability of the global scale's descriptors
- their clearness
- their appropriateness to their level

Questionnaire data analysis and proposal review

1. Creation of a database with the collected information

2. Analysis of the data obtained

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Review of the proposal

➤ **OUR PROJECT: A FIRST STEP**

Subsequent tasks:
▪ Validate the proposal
Test the scale's accuracy and the descriptors' suitability with students, teachers, professional translators and employers

▪ Describe the different professional areas (Level C)

↬

There is a need for a European project

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Develop assessment instruments for each level

Thank you!

PACTE group

References:

-PACTE. 2018. "Competence levels in translation: working towards a European framework". *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer,* 12 (2): 11-131. doi:10.1080/1750399X.2018.1466093.

- PACTE. 2019 (in press). "Establecimiento de niveles de competencias en traducción. Primeros resultados del proyecto NACT". *Onomázein.* 43.