

## WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO HAVE A *CEFR* FOR TRANSLATION COMPETENCE LEVELS?

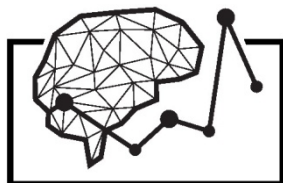
### First results of the NACT project

#### **PACTE Group**

Amparo Hurtado Albir (principal investigator).

Anabel Galán-Mañas, Anna Kuznik, Christian Olalla-Soler,  
Patricia Rodríguez-Inés (research team, in alphabetical order)

Speakers: Amparo Hurtado Albir, Patricia Rodríguez-Inés



Research project (2015-2018):

“Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence (Written Translation)”

Spain's Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness  
(FFI2013-42522-P)

To describe performance levels in translation competence acquisition



To advance towards developing a common European framework of reference for use in translator training and professional translation.



Definition of descriptor scales with performance levels  
(progression)

PACTE (2017) *Establishing competence levels in translation. Proposal 1 (revised) [19/6/2017]*

- ▶ It includes a 3-level scale and 5 descriptive categories.

**TRANSLATION LEVELS PROPOSED:**

- *Translation level C (TC)*. Competences corresponding to each professional profile
- *Translation level B (TB)*. Basic specialized translation competences
- *Translation level A (TA)*. Basic translation competences

### DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES

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

It also includes:

- *A Global scale*
- *Three Annexes with examples of:*
  - text genres liable to be translated at each level
  - cultural and world knowledge
  - technological tools and functions

	<b>Language comp.</b>	<b>Cultural, world knowledge and thematic comp.</b>	<b>Instrumental comp.</b>	<b>Translation service provision comp.</b>	<b>Translation problem solving comp.</b>
<b>Translation C level</b>					
<b>Translation B2 level</b>					
<b>Translation B1 level</b>					
<b>Translation A2 level</b>					
<b>Translation A1 level</b>					

- 1.** Intended to be of use to both the academic and professional arenas.
- 2.** It is independent of language combinations, directionality, stages of education and professional contexts.
- 3.** The progression established in each descriptive category is accumulative.
- 4.** The descriptors describe capabilities to act (*can do*) and not declarative knowledge.
- 5.** All the descriptive categories are interrelated. They interact and balance one another out.



- It does not describe the different areas of professional specialization corresponding to level C (described in general terms).
- It does not include transversal competences.
- It does not specify degrees of translation quality for each level.
- It does not establish or describe learning outcomes or learning tasks suited to each level.



There may be level differences in an individual according to:

- each competence, linguistic combination, directionality, and variety of translation.



There may be differences in the weight each competence has depending on the variety of translation (literary, legal, technical translation, etc.).

Questionnaire (Nov 2017 – Jan 2018)

### **PART I: Questions about the characteristics of the proposal**

- relevance of the categories and levels proposed, and their labels
- convenience of using text genres and their progression
- label and content of level C

Concluding remarks on Part I

### **PART II: Evaluation of the proposed descriptors for each competence**

- suitability of each descriptor
- its clarity
- its adequacy to the level

Plus evaluation of the 3 annexes

### **PART III: Global scale**

- suitability of each descriptor
- its clarity
- its adequacy to the level

Final comments on the questionnaire

▶ Questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended questions (quantitative and qualitative data).

▶ Proposal has been evaluated by academic and professional translation experts from **16** countries:

- **65** translation teachers
- representatives of **11** associations of professional translators
- **23** professional translators

**MAIN RESULTS  
OF THE EVALUATION**

- **Translation level C: *specialist professional translator***

Consolidation of the translator's fields of specialization: competences specific to each professional profile.

- **Translation level B (TB2, TB1): *generalist professional translator***

Introduction to the translator's fields of specialization: basic competences in specialized translation.

- **Translation level A (TA2, TA1): *pre-professional translator***

Introduction to translation: basic competence levels.

	Yes (%)
Are they relevant?	90,9
Is there any category you would add?	13,1
Is there any category you would omit?	22,2
Are the names appropriate?	81,8

- **TC level:** Specialized texts corresponding to at least **one area of professional specialization** (legal; economic and financial; scientific; technical; literary; audiovisual; accessibility; localization).
- **TB2 level:** Semi-specialized texts corresponding to at least **one area of professional practice** (legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific; non-literary publishing).
- **TB1 level:** Non-specialized texts corresponding to at least **one area of professional practice** (legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific; non-literary publishing).
- **TA2 level:** Non-specialized texts of **different types** (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) involving problems related to **register** (tenor, style).
- **TA1 level:** Non-specialized texts of **different types** (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) in **standard language**.

► Annex with examples of text genres

	<b>YES (%)</b>
<b>Do you think using text genres to define levels is useful?</b>	<b>72,7</b>
<b>Do you think this progression is right?</b>	<b>87,5</b>
<b>Do you think a greater distinction between the levels could be achieved by adding “simple” and “complex”?</b>	58,3
<b>Should other areas of genres be added?</b>	26,4
<b>Do you think the proposed progression of genres is suitable for all the language combinations you work with?</b>	<b>95,8</b>

### ▪ **Language competence**

Reading comprehension in the SL and written production in the TL.

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

### ▪ **Cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence**

Mobilization of knowledge:

- Foreign and own culture.
- World knowledge.
- Thematic knowledge corresponding to specific fields (from TB1 onwards).

### ▪ **Instrumental competence**

Use of:

- documentation resources: types of resources and queries: (basic/complex).
- Technological tools: type of tool and functions (basic/advanced/specialized).

### ▪ **Translation service provision competence**

Management of aspects such as:

- The workings of the labour market.
- Professional practice.

### ▪ **Translation problem solving competence**

Types of translation problems liable to be solved at each level.

- Central category: it determines the competences required at each level ↔ text genres liable to be translated in each level.

	<b>Yes (%)</b>
<b>Are they relevant?</b>	<b>98,0</b>
<b>Is there any category you would add?</b>	18,2
<b>Is there any category you would omit?</b>	11,1
<b>Are the names appropriate?</b>	<b>76,8</b>

- 10 descriptors for language competence
- 11 descriptors for cultural competence, world knowledge and thematic competence
- 18 descriptors for instrumental competence
- 20 descriptors for translation service provision competence
- 26 descriptors for translation problem solving competence

Progression:

- Linguistic interferences at TA levels
- Intentionality, from TA2 onwards
- Thematic problems and problems stemming from professional briefs, from TB1 onwards

**EXAMPLE: Translation level B2**

1. Can solve translation problems characteristic of **semi-specialized texts** corresponding to at least one area of professional practice (legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific; non-literary publishing), respecting the target language's conventions and without errors in terms of meaning.
2. Can solve problems stemming from translation briefs in **professional contexts** for a non-specialized target audience.
3. Can solve **language interference** problems.
4. Can solve basic **thematic problems, explicit and implicit cultural differences** and **world knowledge** problems.
5. Can solve **intentionality** problems related to difficulties understanding information in the original text (intertextuality, presuppositions, implicature).
6. Can solve different types of translation problems according to a **translation brief** (equifunctional translation, informative translation, adaptation, etc.).

	Mean of affirmative answers (in %)					Global mean
	Language comp.	Cultural, world knowledge and thematic comp.	Instru-mental comp.	Service provision comp.	Problem solving comp.	
Do you think the descriptor is suitable for describing this competence?	82,9	89,3	91,6	93,9	93,2	<b>90,2</b>
Do you think the descriptor is clearly worded?	86,1	82,1	91,4	91,6	90,8	<b>88,4</b>
Do you think the descriptor is appropriate to this level?	89	94	95,7	92,1	94,2	<b>93,0</b>

**MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES  
BEING CONSIDERED**

➤ Questions raised:

- Do generalist translators really exist or is it just a concept from the educational field?
- Is a generalist translator's job more difficult than a specialist translator's job?

### ON EACH LEVEL DEFINITION

TB level: change to "non-specialist translator"

### ON PROFESSIONAL AREAS

1. A better distinction is required among:

- Professional areas (↔ field: marked/unmarked): legal & administrative; economic & business; technical & scientific; etc.
- Modalities (↔ translation mode): audiovisual; accessibility; localization
- Translation-related tasks (for TC level): transcreation; transcription (of scripts); postediting; revision; project management [↔ translation service provision]

↳ As a result, only professional areas involving written translation will be taken into account.

2. Review professional areas:

↳ Change "non-literary editorial texts" (TB level) and "literary" (C level) to "Humanities".

- Most controversial topics:
  - Non-specialized texts can be highly complex
  - Distinction between specialized and non-specialized texts is not clear
  - The same genre can have various degrees of complexity
  - Difficulty does not only depend on the genre involved, but also on other categories

1. The importance of texts must be made more explicit.
  - ↳ Translators mainly work with texts. It is therefore important to identify what texts they can translate at each level
2. Clearly distinguish between general difficulty of translating certain genres (and its progression) and specific text difficulty
3. Change “non-specialized” to “semi-specialized simple texts” in TB1 level; change to “semi-specialized complex texts” in TB2 level. Establish the differences.
4. Review the Annex of examples of text genres

### ON TEXT COMPLEXITY


► Text difficulty is determined by several factors

#### 1. Extralinguistic difficulty

- Related to **world knowledge**:

+ far from daily events and experiences  + complex


- Related to **cultural knowledge**:

- explicit (i.e. cultural traces are more difficult to identify)  + complex  
+ far from own culture

- Related to **field**:

+ specialized  + complex  
various fields encompassed (multidisciplinarity)

#### 2. Terminological difficulty: linked to field difficulty.

+ specialized terms  + complex  
+ recent/new terms  
+ terms without (conceptual or linguistic) equivalent

### ON TEXT COMPLEXITY

#### 3. Linguistic difficulty

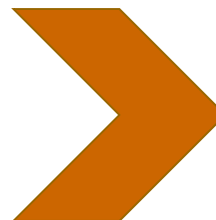
- + complexity of vocabulary, morphosyntax
- + textual complexity
- + mode, tone and style complexity



+ complex

#### 4. Format difficulty

- problems with legibility
- protected documents
- web formats (dynamic webs), etc.



+ complex

### REDEFINING TEXTS AT EACH LEVEL

#### **Translation C level (specialist professional translator)**

Specialized texts corresponding to different professional areas (legal & administrative; economic & financial; scientific; technical; humanities).

↳ specialized texts involving **high** extralinguistic, terminological and linguistic difficulty, in complex formats.

#### **Translation B2 level (non-specialist professional translator)**

Complex semi-specialized texts corresponding to different professional areas (legal & administrative; economic & financial; scientific; technical; humanities).

↳ specialized texts involving **medium** extralinguistic, terminological and linguistic difficulty, in complex formats.

#### **Translation B1 level (non-specialist professional translator)**

Simple semi-specialized texts corresponding to different professional areas (legal & administrative; economic & financial; scientific; technical; humanities).

↳ specialized texts involving **low** extralinguistic, terminological and linguistic difficulty, in complex formats.

### REDEFINING TEXTS AT EACH LEVEL

#### Translation A2 level (pre-professional translator)

Non-specialized texts of different types (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) involving problems related to register (mode, tenor, style).

↳ texts **without** extralinguistic or terminological **difficulties**, and basic register-related linguistic difficulties, in simple formats.

#### Translation A1 level (pre-professional translator)

Non-specialized texts of different types (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, instructional) in standard language.

↳ texts **without** extralinguistic or terminological **difficulties** in standard language, in simple formats.

### LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

#### 1. Add to definition:

... it implies the ability to pass content from one language to another without interference.

#### 2. Add to TC level:

...linguistic knowledge of a specific field (terminology, phraseology, collocates, etc.) is required.

#### 3. Specify that CEFR levels are suggested:

- In a general way: what really matters is being able to solve each level's translation problems (competences compensate for each other).

↳ "is required" changed to "it would be advisable"

- As minimum levels required. These could be higher when referring to L1.

### CULTURAL, WORLD KNOWLEDGE AND THEMATIC COMPETENCE

1. Change the term “thematic” (not clear)  
→ “Specialized field knowledge”
2. Change competence label to → “Extralinguistic competence”
3. Change “mobilize” to “apply” in competence definition and descriptors  
↳ What matters is not the amount of knowledge a translator has, but being able to apply this knowledge to solve translation problems
4. Highlight the relationship between linguistic and instrumental competence

### CULTURAL, WORLD KNOWLEDGE AND THEMATIC COMPETENCE

5. Split cultural, world and specialized field knowledge into different competences?

- No: all three refer to extralinguistic knowledge. They partially overlap but are different.
- Different descriptors have been designed for each one because:
  - (1) they have a different nature
  - (2) they are acquired differently
  - (3) they require different training
  - (4) they pose different translation problems
  - (5) their impact depends on the translation variety (legal translation, literary translation, etc.)

### CULTURAL, WORLD KNOWLEDGE AND THEMATIC COMPETENCE

#### 6. For descriptor scale

- Clearly define what is taken into account to establish progression in difficulty:
  - basic and advanced knowledge
  - explicit and implicit problems
  
- Complexity of required knowledge  $\neq$  complexity of text
  - ↳ not a one-to-one relationship (there may be exceptions)

### TRANSLATION SERVICE PROVISION COMPETENCE (in progress)

1. Distinguish TB2 and TC levels more clearly:
  - TB2: ↔ professional practice of a non-specialist translator
  - TC: ↔ professional practice of a specialist translator
  
2. Explain that TB2 (and TC) descriptors do not apply to all translator types
  - ↳ differences depending on professional and employability areas and type of employment relationship
  
3. Lighten up the wording of descriptors
  - ↳ Describe most relevant concepts separately:
    - In TB1: employability areas; type of employment relationship; areas of specialization; tasks; institutions involved in professional practice
    - In TB2: deontological constraints; basic tax obligations; administrative tasks

### INSTRUMENTAL COMPETENCE (in progress)

1. Change label? Technological and documentation-related competence?  
Split into two competences?: information resources (ability to find information); technology (ability to use tools)
2. Split information-related technology and technology for translating
3. Stress that the use of information resources and technological tools depends on each subject's needs
4. Create an annex of examples of information resources, with a grading of resource types

### **TRANSLATION PROBLEM SOLVING COMPETENCE (in progress)**

- Must be better defined (it is the most important competence). Highlight the following:
  - It includes translation problem solving in all phases of the translation process (understanding/comprehension, reexpression, revision)
  - It entails the use of the other sub-competences to solve translation problems
  - It entails the application of strategies

### **Stress translation-specific difficulties affecting progression:**

Translation brief-related difficulties:

- (1) End-product format
- (2) Change in purpose
- (3) Task complexity
- (4) Deadlines (speed required)
- (5) Lack of documentation about the text topic
- (6) Specific requests (confidentiality, etc.)

Context-related difficulties: conflicts, political context (censorship), lack of instrumental resources, etc.

### **In relation to competence level descriptions**

Professional translator; professional areas; non-specialist translator vs specialist translator

### **In relation to text difficulty levels and linguistic competence**

Standard language; mode, tenor, style; text types; specialized, semi-specialized & non-specialized texts; text format.

Linguistic quality.

### **In relation to extralinguistic competence**

Basic and advanced cultural, world and specialized knowledge; explicit and implicit extralinguistic problems.

### **In relation to translation service provision competence**

Employability areas; type of employment relationship; areas of specialization; tasks; institutions involved in professional practice; deontological constraints; basic tax obligations;

administrative tasks

[...]

+ SPECIFIC CHANGES IN THE WORDING OF SOME DESCRIPTORS

- Our project: a first step
- Need to seek wider consensus

## **To do:**

- Validate our proposal on a large scale
- Describe TC level
- Create evaluation instruments for every level

**Thanks!**

**PACTE Group**

**<http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/pacte/es/proyectonact>**

**<https://www.facebook.com/didtrad.pacte>**

**[cg.didtrad.pacte@uab.cat](mailto:cg.didtrad.pacte@uab.cat)**

- PACTE. 2018. “Competence levels in translation: working towards a European framework”. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 12(2): 111-131.
- PACTE. In press. “Establecimiento de niveles de competencias en traducción. Primeros resultados del proyecto NACT”. *Onomázein* 43.