

## **Towards a European framework of translation competence levels.**

### **Results of the PACTE group's NACT Project**

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)

Amparo Hurtado Albir (principal investigator)

Research team (in alphabetical order):

Laura Asquerino, Anabel Galán-Mañas, Anna Kuznik, Christian Olalla-Soler, Patricia Rodríguez-Inés, Lupe Romero

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)

- ▶ written translation
- professional translation

**Stage 1** (2015 - 2017): Production of a first proposal of level descriptors.

Participants: 23 European translator training centres from 15 countries.

**Stage 2** (2017 - 2018): Verification of proposed level descriptors (based on judgement of experts from the academic and professional translation fields, by means of a questionnaire).

**Stage 3** (2018): Analysis of questionnaire results and production of a second/reviewed proposal.

**DOCUMENT CONTAINING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS**

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*: Competences corresponding to each professional profile (described only in general terms)
- *Translation level B*: Basic specialized translation competences
- *Translation level A*: 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>					



**DESCRIPTORS**

- 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

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 **99** 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**

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

	<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>

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

	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>



**EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL  
AND WORLD KNOWLEDGE (ANNEX 2)**

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	<b>Sí (%)</b>
<b>Do you think the annex of examples of cultural and world knowledge is suitable?</b>	<b>78,8</b>
<b>Is any type of knowledge vital to being able to translate missing at any level?</b>	<b>13,1</b>

	<b>Sí (%)</b>
<b>Do you think the annex of examples of technological tools and functions is suitable?</b>	<b>82,8</b>
<b>Is any type of tool vital to being able to translate missing at any level?</b>	15,2

	Mean of affirmative answers (in %)					Global mean
	TC	TB2	TB1	TA2	TA1	
Do you think the descriptor defines this level well?	93,2	95,4	90,4	93,3	91,2	92,7
Do you think the descriptor is clearly worded?	90,2	91,1	89,2	91,6	89,9	90,4
Do you think the descriptor is appropriate to this level?	97,5	96,6	94,5	95,3	92,9	95,4

# **NACT SECOND PROPOSAL**

## **MAIN CHANGES MADE**

- ▶ A major effort has been made to **clarify** all the **concepts** involved
- ▶ An in-depth review of terminology has been carried out to **standardize** the use of **terms** and the concepts
- ▶ The descriptors' **wording** has been thoroughly revised to make it **clearer**

## **Translation level names and content**

- 1.** Change in the **name** of translation level B (“generalist translator” in the 2017 proposal) → “non-specialist translator”
- 2.** Limitation to **written** translation →
  - all references to modalities of translation other than purely written translation (i.e. to audiovisual translation, accessibility and localization) have been removed from level C (Annex 1)
  - the tasks of revision and post-editing have also been removed
- 3.** Revision of the **areas** of professional specialization in translation → the “non-literary publishing” (level B) and “literary” (level C) areas of professional specialization have both been renamed “**humanistic**”

**Use of texts to distinguish between levels**

- 1.** Distinction between the general difficulty of text genres and the specific difficulty of texts
- 2.** Definition of the difficulty of texts
- 3.** Definition of specialized, semi-specialized and non-specialized texts
- 4.** Distinction between simple and complex semi-specialized texts
- 5.** Revision of the annex of examples of text genres liable to be translated

### Competence names

Cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence → “extralinguistic competence”

Translation service provision competence → “service provision competence”



### Competences

- Described in more detail
- Specific characteristics, more clear
- Concepts pertaining to each competence, better defined
- Progression, modified in some cases
- Descriptors, modified:
  - Reworded to enhance clarity
  - Merged when related
  - Eliminated when implicit in other competences
  - Added new ones

### Global scale

- Including **a global descriptor for each competence**, one clearly different from the other descriptors. The wording of each such descriptor incorporates the changes made when each competence was revised
- Putting the **descriptors related to translation problem solving competence** first in each list, as a means of immediately specifying the translation problems a person must be capable of solving at each level

### Annexes

Each of the three Annex has been modified to some degree:

- Annex 1: Examples of text genres liable to be translated
- Annex 2: Examples of cultural and world knowledge
- Annex 3: Examples of documentation resources and technological resources

### **Inclusion of a glossary**

It has 38 entries, in which 75 concepts are defined, organized into 7 sections:

- General concepts
- Concepts related to :
  - establishing text levels
  - language competence
  - extralinguistic competence
  - instrumental competence
  - service provision competence
  - translation problem solving competence

**NACT SECOND PROPOSAL**  
**MAIN CHARACTERISTICS**

- (1) It focuses on **written** translation
- (2) It refers to **professional** written translation
- (3) It is intended to be of use to both the **academic and professional** arenas
- (4) It is **independent** of language combinations, directionality, stages of education (degree, master's degree) and professional contexts
- (5) The **progression** established in each descriptive category is accumulative

(6) As the descriptors refer to competences, they describe capabilities to act. They are all therefore formulated in terms of capability to act (*can do*) and entail the application of knowledge

(7) An effort has been made 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 and by all potential users of the scales (translation students and lecturers, translators and employers) → there are no indicators of a more cognitive nature, which are more difficult to observe.

(8) All the descriptive categories are **interrelated**

- (9) The proposal does **not** describe the different areas of professional specialization in translation corresponding to **level C**, which is only described in general terms
- (10) The proposal does **not** include **transversal sub-competences**
- (11) The proposal does **not** specify **degrees of translation quality** for each level
- (12) The proposal does **not** describe **learning outcomes**. Likewise, it does not establish or describe learning tasks suited to each level



## **Possible differences in level and in the relative importance of competences**

The **level** at which a person performs in translation may differ on the basis of:

- Each competence
- Language combination
- Directionality
- Area of professional specialization in translation

Additionally, the relative importance of competences can differ depending on the **area** of professional specialization in translation involved

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

## To do:

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

**EFFORT project** (*Towards a European Framework of Reference for Translation*): <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2020-1-ES01-KA203-082579>

**EACT project** (*Evaluation in the Acquisition of Translation Competence*): <https://pagines.uab.cat/eact/en>

## Thanks!

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

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

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