PACTE: An Empirical-Experimental Study of Translation Competence (1997-2015)

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PACTE, 1997-2015

Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation

Group: translators and translation teachers training professional translators in UAB, Barcelona, Spain.

Goals: To build a model of translation competence (Stage 1) and a model of TC acquisition (Stage 2) that could be empirically validated.

Translation: a communicative activity directed towards achieving aims that involves decision making and problem solving, and requires expert knowledge.

Study: process oriented study (data obtained from experimental studies of the mental processes used to translate); product oriented study (data obtained from an electronic corpus of the translated texts by subjects).

Stage 1: An Empirical Study of Translation Competence

❏ **The Basic Premises**

❏ **The Primitive Model of TC (1998)**

❏ **Sub-Competences of TC**

❏ **Research Instruments and Tasks**

❏ **The Revised Model of TC (PACTE, 2000)**

The Basic Premises of PACTE`s Model

❖ Translation competence is qualitatively different from bilingual competence;

❖ Translation competence is the underlying system of knowledge needed to translate;

❖ Translation competence is an expert knowledge;

❖ Translation competence is made up of a system of sub-competencies being inter-related and hierarchical;

❖ The sub-competencies of translation competence are: **a language sub-competence** in two languages; **an extra-linguistic sub-competence**; **an instrumental/professional sub-competence**; a **psycho-physiological sub-competence**; **a transfer sub-competence**; and **a strategic sub-competence**.

The Sub-Competencies of TC (1998)

1. **A language sub-competence** in two languages: the underlying system of knowledge and abilities necessary for linguistic communication in both languages;
2. **An extra-linguistic sub-competence**: the knowledge about the world in general and specific areas of knowledge (knowledge about translation (its ruling premises: types of translation unit, the processes required, etc); bicultural knowledge; encyclopedic knowledge and subject knowledge (in specific areas)).
3. **The instrumental/professional sub-competence**: the knowledge and abilities associated with the practice of professional translation (knowledge and use of all kinds of documentation sources; knowledge and use of new technologies; knowledge of the work market and the profession (prices, types of briefs, etc.)).

4.   The psycho-physiological sub-competence: the ability to use psychomotor, cognitive, and attitudinal resources.

5.   The transfer sub-competence: the central competence integrating all the others): the ability to complete the transfer process from the source text to the target text (to understand the source text and re-express it in the target language, taking into account the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the receptor).

6.   The strategic sub-competence: the individual procedures, conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, used to solve the problems encountered during the translation process (detecting problems, taking decisions, and making up for errors or weaknesses in the other sub-competencies).

The inter-relations are controlled by the strategic sub-competence.

Research Instruments and Tasks

❑ Two types of subjects: **Professional Translators** (experimental group 1), and **Bilingual subjects** who are not translators (experimental group 2).

❑ Instruments: a commercial software program (**PROXY**), **protocol texts** for translation, **questionnaires**, a **direct observation** of subjects' activities while translating, and **retrospective and guided Think-Aloud-Protocols** (TAPs).

(PROXY is a user monitoring program, i.e. a program that permits the remote control of workstations and users connected to the same network, that is able to record and monitor subjects' activities during the translation process, in real time).

Revising the PACTE Model

★ **Transfer capacity** of the expert translator: the combination of all the sub-competencies, the ability to carry out the transfer process from ST to TT.

★ The expert translator as **a bilingual** can both change from one language to another and contrast the two languages (Interlingual knowledge).

★ **Strategic sub-competence**: planning the translation project; applying translation strategies; monitoring and evaluating both the translation process and product.

★ **Knowledge about translation**: it appears to constitute a specific sub-competence.

★ Psycho-physiological sub-competence: not a 'sub-competence' but '**psycho-physiological components**'.

The Revised Model (2000)

1. The bilingual sub-competence,
2. Extra-linguistic sub-competence,
3. Knowledge about translation sub-competence,
4. Instrumental sub-competence, and
5. Strategic sub-competence.

And Psycho-Physiological Components

Stage 2: An Empirical Study of TC Acquisition

Translation competence acquisition is a dynamic process evolving from novice knowledge (pre-translation competence) to expert knowledge (translation competence), in which the translation competence sub-competencies are developed and restructured.

The experimental subjects are translation students and the group of professional translators acts as the reference group.

The same types of tests as those of TC experiment are carried out over a period of two years, starting with translation students at the beginning of their training, and using the same experimental tasks and instruments, using a repeated measurement experiment design.

(PACTE, 2005, 2009, 2014, 2015)

Thank you!