

TRANSLATION COMPETENCES AND MARKET DEMANDS

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Rezumat: În condițiile integrării europene piața a căpătat un caracter internațional. Evident, serviciile traducătorilor sînt tot mai des solicitate. Companiile își doresc specialiști care pot efectua o traducere calitativă într-o perioadă scurtă de timp. În acest articol, abordăm problema competenței de traducere, analizăm componentele ei și comparăm competența de traducere cu cerințele pieței muncii.

Cuvinte-cheie: competența de traducere, limba sursă, limba țintă, procesul de traducere, piața muncii.

Abstract: The international character of the market is more than ever evident today, when companies become multinational. Evidently, the need for translators is increasing. Companies seek translators that can translate quickly and efficiently. This article analyzes what makes a good translator in today's highly technological world. It also aims at determining basic translation competences and the way they meet the market demand. The paper is an attempt to prove that in today's fast-moving world translators simply cannot face the market demand, if they do not make use of modern technologies. The paper will consider the advantages and disadvantages of software and IT, used in translation and the way they affect the process of translation.

Key-words: translation, competence, market, market demands.

The attempt to answer the question what makes up a professional translator leads to the analysis of the competences involved in the process of translation. First of all, it would be useful to compare the definitions of translation competence (TC) given by different scholars.

Thus, Willis claims that translation competence calls for “an inter-lingual super competence based on comprehensive knowledge of the SL and TL, including the text-pragmatic dimensions and consists of the ability to integrate the two monolingual competences of a higher level”.

PACTE group understand TC as “...the underlying system of knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to be able to translate”.

Bell defines TC as “the knowledge and skills the translator must possess in order to carry out a translation” (all definitions cited in 4, p. 376).

According to Albrecht Neubert translation requires a complex set of skills and knowledge. The variety of topics translators deal with during their work means that they cannot be experts in all the domains in which they are engaged. It often turns out the translators take the roles of mediators rather than experts in a certain subject. Their knowledge of the subject will always be less than that of the author of the text or sender of the message. Based on these considerations, we come to the conclusion that the translators have to use a variety of external resources in order to be able to understand and use the new information in the appropriate situation and context rather quickly. In this respect, experts in a particular field have a big advantage over translators. If the translators haven't got sufficient knowledge to deal with a text from a particular field they have to be able to search for information in order to achieve the desirable effect. Translators have to be able to re-create the ST, taking into account its linguistic and cultural peculiarities.

Albrecht Neubert claims that translation competence includes the following sub-competences:

Language sub-competence, which includes knowledge about the grammatical systems of the two languages, their morphologic and syntactic peculiarities, sub-languages (terms and structures used in different fields).

Textual sub-competence, which derives from the language sub-competence and it means the ability to distinguish between text genres: legal, literary, technical, and so on.

Subject sub-competence, represents knowledge of the field to which the translated text belongs, it includes encyclopaedic knowledge and specialist knowledge.

Cultural sub-competence - since translators are considered to be mediators between cultures, they need to enlarge their cultural knowledge.

Transfer sub-competence – involves the methods and strategies that allow the translator to translate the ST into the TT. It is the ability to translate quickly and efficiently.

If we take a close look at these sub-competences, we can notice that they all are interdependent and are not effective if mastered separately.

Thus, according to Neubert, translation competence is a multifaceted concept which includes elements related to knowledge; he calls them “passive” elements and “active” elements, which envisages methods and procedures undertaken when translating.

For the sake of comparison, we propose to analyse another model of translation competence, which is proposed by PACTE group. This group has devoted a decade in order to work out a model of TC, based on the assumption that translation is a communicative activity, having

FIGURE 1. PACTE Translation Competence Model (2003)

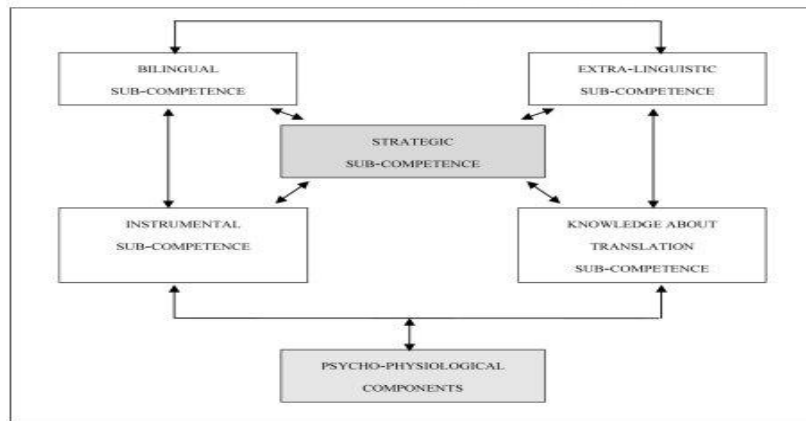


Fig. 1: PACTE's model of TC¹

certain goals. It involves decision making and problem solving processes. PACTE model of TC consists of a set of interrelated sub-competences. It's of interest to note that according to their model the sub-competences can compensate for one another.

Bilingual sub-competence consists of the underlying systems of knowledge and skills that are needed for linguistic communication to take place in two languages. Knowledge and skills stand for: grammatical competence; textual competence; illocutionary competence and socio-linguistic competence.

Extra-linguistic sub-competence includes knowledge about the surrounding world, background information and bicultural knowledge.

Instrumental sub-competence comprises the skills required to work as a professional translator, the ability to use search tools, information technologies

that can facilitate the work, such as Translation memories, corpora of texts, software intended to make the job easier and most importantly, to save time.

Translation knowledge sub-competence is knowledge of the principles guiding translation, such as strategies, methods, procedures, and the ability to use them in practice.

Psycho-physiological competence is the ability to use all kinds of psychomotor, cognitive and attitudinal resources.

Strategic sub-competence is the basic element of this model, since it integrates all the sub-competences of the model taken together. It is the ability to complete the transfer process, given the function of the translation. It involves the ability to analyze and synthesize the extralinguistic information and grasp the meaning of the text, as well as the ability to paraphrase the ST according to the rules of the TL.

As we can notice from the above given models, linguists point out the same sub-competences, but they slightly differ in terms. Thus, Albrecht Neubert speaks about language sub-competence, while PACTE group mentions bilingual sub-competence, in essence, they are alike.

The same correspondence can be noticed in instrumental sub-competence. So, it is generally agreed that in today's highly technological world, it is a must to be technically minded, to be able to use the tools, which are intended to facilitate the translator's job and to save time. It would be a pity not to use translation tools, such as professional software, translation memories, electronic dictionaries, and so on. Not always the translator can find the solution to a certain problem. Sometimes, one feels the need to ask for advice. The Internet offers the possibility to communicate with professionals in a given field and ask any question. Professional forums are a good resource which could be of help to the translator.

There is one thing that is pointed out by Albrecht Neubert and is not mentioned by PACTE group, this is subject sub-competence. Two options are possible when talking about subject sub-competence. The first, which has been widely used for a long time, this is the translator has to train in one field in order to produce an adequate translation. He/she often has to get a second degree in the field he intends to work. This takes a lot of time and limits the possibilities of the translator to work in several fields. The second option is offered by informational technologies and mainly by the Internet. The translator can specialize in a certain field in front of his personal computer. It will take the translator some time, but definitely less than the second degree would require. Besides, it is possible to specialize in several related fields at a time. Moreover, IT offers great possibilities to work with text corpora, which are subject oriented.

Having analyzed the components of the translation competence let's see how it relates to the market demand. Market demand is in close connection to the term "professional qualification", which includes the ability to work quickly and efficiently. These are the most important indices of any qualified specialist. The client wants to get a well done translation in the shortest possible time. This means the translator has to be able to use all the competences mentioned above, given the time constraints set by the client.

If we compare the conditions set forth by the market demand and those we offer to our students, we can notice some differences. In classes we put emphasis on the quality of translation, which is natural, since we are interested in the way the students can use all their competences, but on the other hand, we forget about the time constraints. It is really a very important item, which has to be taken into account in the training of translators'. McAlester proposes to evaluate the translators according to the time it takes the students to translate a text.

The next thing professional qualification requires is the ability to translate specialized texts. It is generally believed that it is impossible to train students in all the fields, and it is not our aim. Still we do have to teach them to work in one or two sub-fields, which will give them the possibility to develop their information finding skills. The students have to be confident in their ability to navigate the unfamiliar areas in the fields, which have been unknown to them. The chosen fields have to be diverse in order to provide the learners opportunities to develop their professional competences and skills. Moreover, the choice of texts has to correspond to the reality of the professional market, so that the students can get used to legal, medical technical or commercial texts. Thus, when exposed to reality, they will be able to specialize quickly in the desired field.

This factor is in close connection to the next requirement set forth by the market demand, that of versatility. It means that the translator has to be able to switch from one field to another. Of course, his or her range of activity cannot be very diverse, due to the factors mentioned above in this article, still the ability to switch from one field to another is very important for a professional translator. Every translator has to be able to search for the necessary information, to read articles, which relate to the topic he or she has to translate, as well as to produce texts in that field. In short, translators have to learn to be quick in specializing in new fields.

Qualification also implies instrumental skills. It is a very important component, since without it, the translator will lose a lot of time. Nowadays, few people translate using a paper dictionary, a pen and a piece of paper. Documents are made in e-format. But usually, clients have hard copies of the documents they want to translate. In this case, the translator needs appropriate equipment (scanner, converter) in order to facilitate his work and to save his time.

Efficiency is the last but not the least important component of qualification. Translator's work has to be efficient; otherwise sooner or later he/she will lose clients.

Finally, if we compare the components of the translation competence and the components of qualification, we can come to the conclusion that there are common features between them. The educational process for translators is organized in such a way as to prepare professionals; it is just the question of priorities. We have to shift the stress a bit. Not only the quality of translation is of great importance, but also the time, spent for this work, the ability to cope with a text from a foreign field, as well as the ability to use technical equipment. All of these things, taken together make a good translator.

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