

Chapter 9

Exploring Process– Oriented Translation Competence Assessment: Rationale, Necessity, and Potential From a Problem–Solving Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In translation education and training, competence assessment plays an essential role in fostering students' competence development. This chapter promotes process-oriented assessment from a translation problem-solving perspective, with supporting evidence from a longitudinal study. Although process-oriented competence assessment is increasingly becoming more important in translation education and training, the relation between the development of translation competence and the translation process remains underexplored. This chapter provides a translation problem-solving perspective to understand the rationale for and the necessity of process-oriented competence assessment and suggests practical and feasible process-oriented assessment tools in the translation classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical translation assessment mainly consists of the evaluation of the learners' translation competence (Martínez Melis & Hurtado Albir, 2001). In traditional assessment approaches, the translation product has been regarded as the main object of assessment. Relevant discussions have mostly focused on developing rating scales that are based on translation errors and translation problems (e.g. House, 1997; Kim, 2009; Kussmaul, 1995). The development of translation competence is then inferred from the assessment of the product, i.e. the translation. However, as a result of a recent paradigm shift from teacher-centred transmissionist to learner-centred constructivist approaches (Kim, 2013), a number of translation scholars have begun to advocate for process-oriented approaches (e.g., Angelone, 2016; Gile,

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2009; Kiraly, 2000; Massey, 2005; Orlando, 2012; Zhong, 2005). Consequently, assessing the learners' development of translation competence has also become increasingly important.

Process-oriented pedagogical approaches suggest the use of some tools to gather more detailed information about translation processes. For example, Fox (2000) uses translation diaries in a process-oriented competency¹-based translation course. The author encourages students to keep a record of the translation process, including how they solve translation problems and the rationale behind their translation choices. Similarly, Gile (2004) proposes the adoption of integrated problem and decision reporting as a pedagogical tool. To this end, students are required to report on the problems they encounter during the translation process, the steps they take to solve them and the rationale for their final decisions. In Shei's (2005) translation classroom, the students are required to analyse the text and the context, explain the problem-solving procedures and record other task-related thoughts in their translation commentaries. Orlando (2012) also encourages the use of a translator's diary as a pedagogical tool for instructors to have a better understanding of the translation processes followed by students and to discover adequate teaching and remedial strategies. However, the relevance of these pedagogical tools to the development of translation competence is still underexplored, with these discussions mostly focusing on the novelty or effectiveness of such pedagogical tools. In other words, further research is necessary on how to assess the development of translation competence as reflected by the translation process.

Therefore, this chapter aims to introduce a problem-solving perspective to conceptualise the development of translation competence as part of the translation process, which provides a rationale for process-oriented approaches to the assessment of translation competence. The proposed conceptualisation is also supported by empirical evidence from a longitudinal study with a small group of translation students. Findings from this empirical study highlight the necessity of process-oriented assessment and suggest a more effective use of relevant pedagogical tools in translation education and training.

THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

As the development of translation competence is the main object of study in pedagogical assessment, the conceptualisation of translation competence and its development is essential since it lays the foundation for understanding and implementing effective forms of assessment in translator education (Huertas Barros and Vine, 2018a, 2018b). This section provides a brief literature review on the conceptualisation of translation competence, with an emphasis on the translation process. It should be noted that there is a lack of terminology consistency when referring to this notion, with some authors using the term *translator competence* to entail a wider range of skills related to the communities of professional translators (see discussions in Biel, 2011; Kiraly, 2000; Pym, 2011). However, the term *translation competence* will be used throughout this chapter because the emphasis here is not on specific competence components.

The Prevalence of Multicomponential Models

For the past few decades, the conceptualisation of translation competence has been characterised by the prevalence of multicomponential models and an increase in the number and scope of competence components. In its first conceptualisations (e.g. Wilss, 1976), translation competence is seen as a supercompetence that requires interlingual competence as its prerequisite. However, more recent conceptualisations conceive it as a multicomponential concept that goes far beyond language competence.

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