



An Application of “Competence-Oriented Research of Translation” to a Programme Evaluation.

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Résumé : Beaucoup de chercheurs ont étudié la question de la compétence traductionnelle en vue de saisir ce qui se passe dans la tête d’un traducteur compétent ou pour comprendre ce en quoi elle consiste. Le paradigme de “recherche en traduction orientée-compétence” est présenté par Gutt (2010, p205) comme “se fondant sur les investigations scientifiques de la compétence des êtres humains à communiquer l’un avec l’autre” (ma propre traduction). Ce paradigme est appliqué ici pour la première fois à l’évaluation du programme d’études de la traduction de la RD Congo pour essayer de saisir la conceptualisation de la compétence traductionnelle qu’ont les concepteurs. Nous croyons que plus on a la vue claire de ce en quoi consiste la compétence traductionnelle et comment elle se construit ou s’acquiert, meilleurs seront les résultats du processus de formation.

Mots-Clés : Compétence traductionnelle, approche d’évaluation de programme d’études de traduction basée-compétence

Une application du paradigme “Recherche en traduction orientée compétence” à l’évaluation d’un programme d’études

Abstract: Translation competence has been addressed by a number of researchers with a view to getting access to what is going on in the competent translator’s mind or in order to know what it consists of. “Competence-oriented research of translation” (CORT), Gutt (2010, p205) writes, “embeds itself in the scientific investigations of the competence of human beings to communicate with each other”. This research paradigm has been applied for the first time to the evaluation of the translation training programme of DR Congo in order to try to capture the conceptualisation of translation competence designers have. It is believed that the clearer view one can have of what translation competence consists of and how it is constructed or acquired, the better will be the results of the training process.

Keywords: Translation competence, competence-based approach to translation programme evaluation

Introduction

The question as to what **translation competence** is or is composed of is neither new nor trivial. It has been a long sought goal of translation theorists as well as translator trainers (Valentine 1996). A number of researchers have addressed the issue with a view to getting access to what is going on in the competent translator’s mind (Wanwei accessed 27th August 2011; Ladmiral 2010; Ressereccio et al. 2008; Salinas 2003; Gile 2005; Lee-Jahnke 2003; Valentine 1996)

or in other words to know “what it consists of” (Gutt 2010). This points to the relevance of the paradigm followed by Gutt (2010): competence-oriented research of translation (CORT), which is the headlight in this paper. The author notes that “Competence-oriented research of translation embeds itself in the scientific investigations of the competence of human beings to communicate with each other” (p205). It follows that in the scope of CORT paradigm, translation competence equals communicative competence. However, translation competence, that is the professional translator’s competence, differs from communicative competence in that it is expert knowledge not possessed by any communicator. The latter is defined as being categorical or abstract and having a wide knowledge base; it is conscious and can be made explicit; it is organized in complex structures and can be applied to problem solving (PACTE group 2003).

As can be noticed, this research paradigm is grounded in cognitive approaches to translation wherein it is noted by Jeremy Munday (2009) under the entry **cognition and translation**, that

Translation, in all its modalities, is a cognitive activity that requires the unfolding of a mental process (the **translation process**) and the existence of a specific competence (**translation competence**). Translation has been studied within cognitive approaches to translation from different perspectives, focusing on the **translation process**, on **translation competence** and on its acquisition. Studies draw on other disciplines, such as cognitive psychology, expertise studies, neurophysiology and cognitive science. In the field of translation studies, **empiricalexperimental research** has been carried out mostly on translation as a cognitive activity.

The quote clearly specifies the triple focal points of cognitive approaches in the study of translation; that is, translation process, translation competence and the acquisition of this competence. The present paper applies CORT paradigm to understand the conceptualisation of the last two points of study¹ in the DRC translation training programme. In other words, the paper evaluates the DRC translation training programme in the light of the above model with a view to capturing the philosophy related to translation competence development. Given that translator training seeks to develop the competence on the part of learners, it is good to overview the concept “competence” before evaluating its conceptualisation in the DRC training programme.

1. Understanding the concept of competence

I will start with its origin in linguistics and will end up in Translation Studies, notably with the model validated already by empirical research conducted by the PACTE group (2011).

1.1. *Competence in Chomskyan linguistics*

The term competence was first brought to the fore by the linguist Noam Chomsky (1965) who distinguished it from performance. In this matter, Ellis (1986, pp5-6) writes that :

According to Chomsky (1965), competence consists in the mental representation of linguistic rules which constitutes the speaker-hearer's internalized grammar. Performance consists of the comprehension and production of language...However, because the rules the learner has internalized are not open to direct inspection, it has been necessary to examine how the learner performs, mainly in production.

That is, linguistic competence is viewed as a universal mental faculty which enables humans to speak and hear internalized grammar. Though not open to direct inspection as such, it nevertheless reveals the speaker's mastery of the language. Performance by contrast refers to what can be inspected mainly at the production level; for example, the utterances.

This brief overview of the linguistic competence should be viewed as an introduction to the burning question of what the translator competence is. Before closing this overview, I would like to mention Paradis (2003, p1) who indicates the divide between advocates of modularity and those of non-modularity of the mind. In his article „“ Is the notion of linguistic competence at all relevant in Cognitive Linguistics?""", one can read that

The notion of linguistic competence rests on the assumption that people are equipped with a lexical component that holds linguistic information only. There is currently a lively debate going on about whether it is possible to distinguish between linguistic meaning specifications and non-linguistic (encyclopedic) meaning specifications.

This involves one of the most intriguing issues in linguistics, i.e., what the relationship between language and conceptual representation really is. The notion of modularity is central to this debate: arguments for modularity in the generative camp and non-modularity in the cognitive camp.

Cognitive researchers seem to be not very interested in the debate of modularity and non-modularity of the mind but rather in the complementarity between linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge. Some of them have shown how meaning results from the interaction between world knowledge stored in one's memory and linguistic elements (Shank 1982, Lakoff and Johnson 1987, Fillmore 1977, Langacker 1987 cited by Stefanink and Balecescu (2009)). The complementarity cannot be better expressed than by the following citation:

It is...difficult to imagine purely linguistic knowledge cut from extra-linguistic one: in principle linguistic signs and their combinations name extra-linguistic entities ... and knowledge of the relationships between these signs and what they designate is part and parcel of linguistic knowledge (Gile 2005, p109) (translation my own)

Actually, it does not mean that Gile is not aware of the denotational theory of meaning, but that drawing a demarcation line between linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge would be a tedious endeavour, one which would not be very helpful for translation pedagogy.

The notion of linguistic competence as defined by Chomsky and propagated in the generative trend implies modularity of the mind; that is, the isolation of the linguistic component from other cognitive abilities. Interested readers are referred to Paradis (2003), to mention but this, for the counter argument of the modularity of the mind. For pedagogical purposes, I will stick to the linguistic-encyclopedic divide, i.e., as referring to separate components.

1.2. Competence in cognitive Translation Studies

In his glossary of the translation key concepts, Munday (2009) writes that translation competence is

The set of knowledge, abilities and attitudes that a translator/interpreter must possess in order to perform adequately his/her professional activity. It is a type of expert knowledge combining declarative knowledge (knowing what) and procedural knowledge (knowing how), being predominantly procedural. Translation competence is formed by several interrelated components or sub-competences,...Translation competence is an acquired skill which undergoes different phases, evolving from novice to expert knowledge.

This definition backs up the amalgamation of declarative and procedural knowledge and inserts translation in the domain of expertise studies. The quote shows that the competence is predominantly procedural joining thereby the position held in his time by Bell (1991) and demonstrated by the PACTE group (see 2011). The model by the PACTE group is componential one and views translation competence in terms of components or sub competences. In line with the translator training, it is the one which fits best as it isolates the different components and specifies which is declarative and which is procedural.

1.3. The model of Translation Competence by the PACTE group

Given the methodological rigour which led to its validation in 2011, the PACTE group model has gained the ground by being widely cited in the literature (Ressurreccio et al. 2008; Hurtado Albir and Alves 2009). The PACTE group (2011) defines translation competence as “the underlying system of knowledge required to translate” and divides it into five interrelated sub competences and psycho-physiological components. They are 1) bilingual sub competence, 2) the extra- linguistic sub competence, 3) the translation sub competence, 4) the instrumental sub competence and 5) the strategic sub competence and 6) the psychophysiological components.

As it can be seen, the picture of the translation competence as mentioned above contrasts with what most people outside the circle of Translation Studies think: namely that translation competence involves only knowing the working languages (and to some extent the cultures behind them). By so doing, they fail to appreciate the wealth of the cognitive processing taking place during the act of translating. That is why I here rely on the “Competence-oriented research of translation (CORT)” (Gutt 2010, p205). The framework equates translation competence with communicative competence involving more skills. Translation is viewed here as an act of communication (see also Hurtado Albir and Alves 2009). Put clearly, translation involves a kind of bilingual communication.

2. Methodological considerations

The data on which this paper is based are drawn from Lumbala’s (2020) PhD dissertation which attempts to show that translation is a cognitive activity which involves more than just the linguistic competence and that it (translation) is a constructed, learnable skill on the one hand. On the strength of this premise, it evaluates the programme² designed for the training of translators (and interpreters) in the DRC with a view to pointing out the conceptualisation of the translation competence. The evaluative endeavour has been carried out in the light of competence-based approach to translation programme evaluation (henceforth CBATPE) which is but a variant of the CORT paradigm advocated by Gutt (2010).

Competence-based approach to translation programme evaluation is a pedagogical framework which views translator education as nothing other than training an expert professional that will carry out translating activity efficiently on the basis of the skills gained. In other words, this framework focuses the lenses on the training of the “learner” as a “thinker and problem-solver” (Dam-Jensen and Heine 2009) or on what the learner will be able to do in the professional setting at the end of his/her studies. Stated differently, in this approach, the learner is expected to develop mental aptitudes which will allow him/her to generate adapted solutions to changing and diverse situations given that translation is an activity which is never the same in the sense of ready-made recipes for any problem (Chauvigné and Coulet 2010, p16 paraphrased in Kambaja forthcoming). Therefore, the CBATPE is used here as a framework for understanding the conceptualisation of the translation competence underlying the (DRC) training programme.

It is worth noting that the competences that are expected of the translation learners have already been studied, modeled and validated by empirical research carried out by the PACTE group in Spain (2011). Following CORT paradigm

advocated by Gutt (2010), I have found CBAT suitable for programme evaluation in this work. To the best of my knowledge, it is the first time that this variant of the CORT has been applied to a programme evaluation in line with the PACTE group model of the translation competence.

In fact, CBATPE seems to be more advantageous over other models of programme evaluation (the experimental/quasi-experimental models, Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model, the outcome-based evaluation model, the Logic model, the CIPP model, etc.) for its end target is the conceptualisation of the translation competence by programme designers. In this work it is intended to point out the DRC training philosophy as far as translation competence is concerned; that is, her conceptualisation of the competence to develop on the part of the learners via the evaluation of the programme designed to that end. It focuses the lenses on the axiom "Garbage in garbage out" or as Mary Baker Eddy (1906, p262) puts it "To begin rightly is to end rightly".

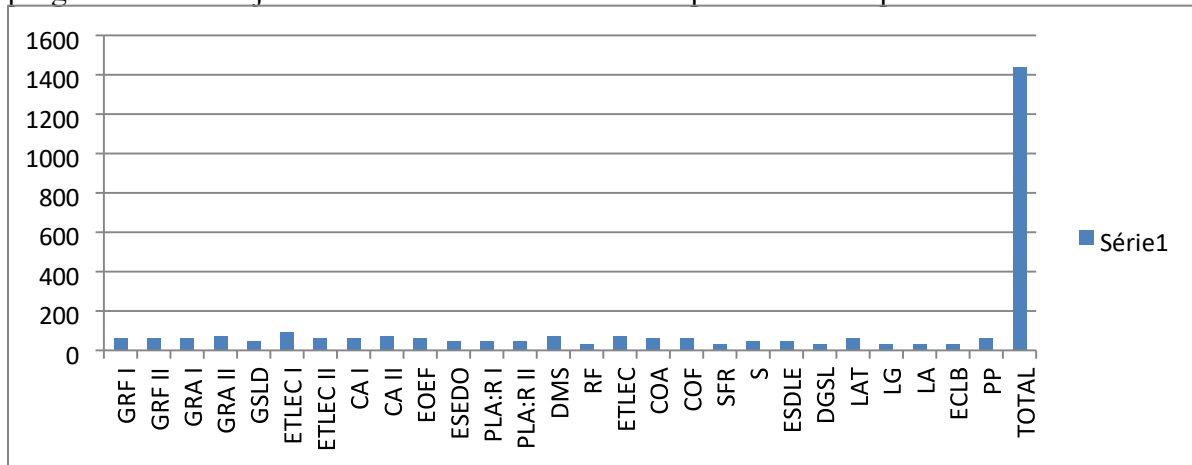
3. Analysis of the DRC translation training programme

In any data analysis endeavour, categorization happens to be the scientific way of proceeding. In line with Chesterman 2001, the formulation of categories in a particular research project is determined partly by the nature of the material being studied and partly by the choice of theoretical model and its basic concepts.

The analysis task consists in finding and stating which subject is designed for developing which sub-competence of translation competence. That is, the analysis of the national programme is carried out as follows: subjects are categorized in line with the subcompetence of the translation competence model by the PACTE group they are intended to develop. In other words, categories are the sub-competences from the PACTE group model followed by their brief conceptual definitions. Then subjects are screened and inserted into their corresponding categories. Furthermore, some of these broad categories will be subcategorized for a better processing of the data. This way it would become easy to figure out from the graphics of subjects which sub-competences are designed to be developed and at what rate in terms of hourly credit.

a. **The bilingual sub-competence** is predominantly procedural knowledge required to communicate in two languages. It is made up of pragmatic, sociolinguistic, textual and lexico-grammatical knowledge in each language.

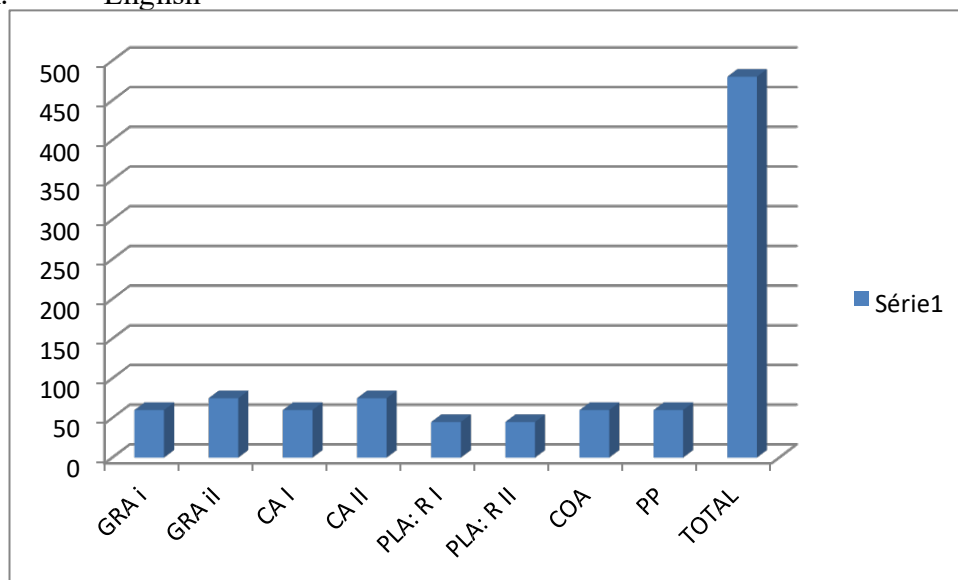
Following are in the national programme the subjects which are intended to develop this sub-competence:



Subjects designed for the bilingual sub-competence

Given that the development of this sub-competence involves, as its name indicates, more than one language, I find it appropriate to further split the subjects in the above graphic in line with the language they are supposed to go with. The programme offers subjects for developing skills in three different languages: 1) English, 2) French and 3) a third foreign language (which is here Portuguese) and other subjects for developing skills in non-specific language.

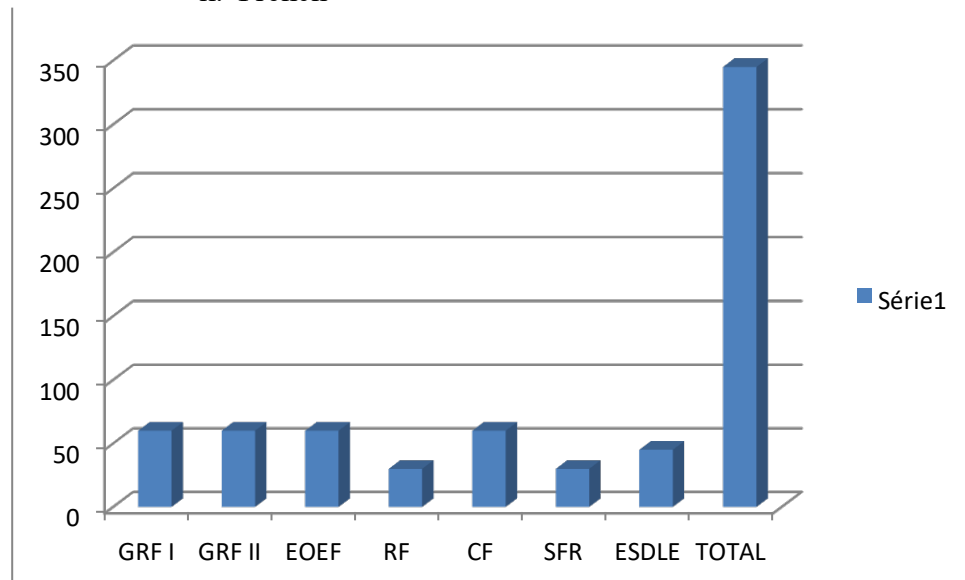
i. English



Graphic 1.1: subjects designed for English

The subjects in the above table are those designed to teach English as a foreign language, here the source language. It obtains 480 hours/1440 devoted to the bilingual subcompetence or 33.3%.

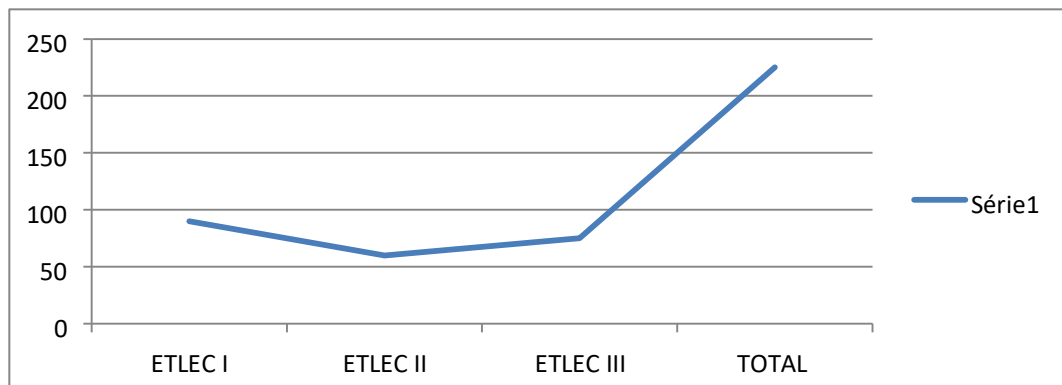
ii. French



Graphic 1.2: subjects designed for French

Subjects designed for French language obtain 345 hours/1440 or 23.9%.

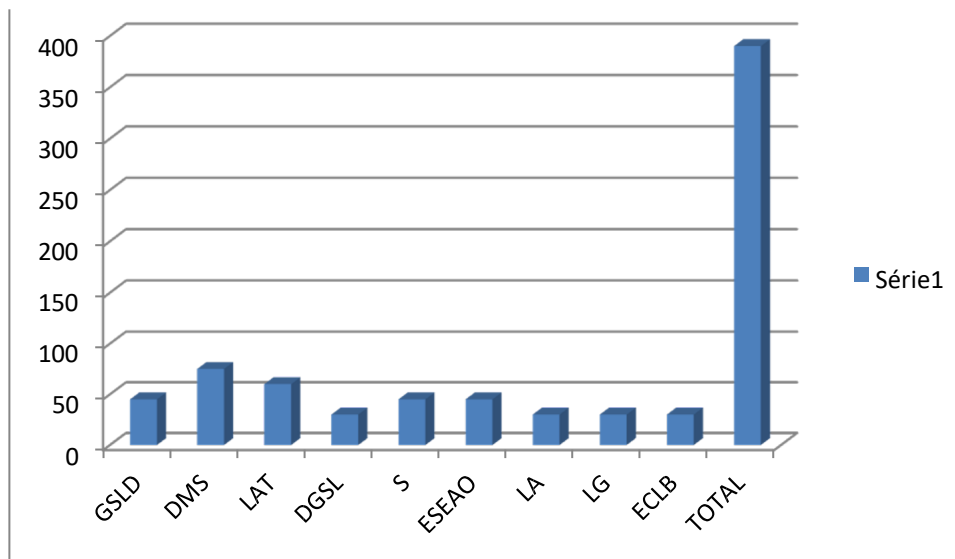
- Subjects for a third foreign language



Graphic 1.3: subjects designed for a third foreign language (Portuguese)

Subjects designed for a third foreign language obtain 225hours/1440 or 15.6%.

- Subjects for non-specific language

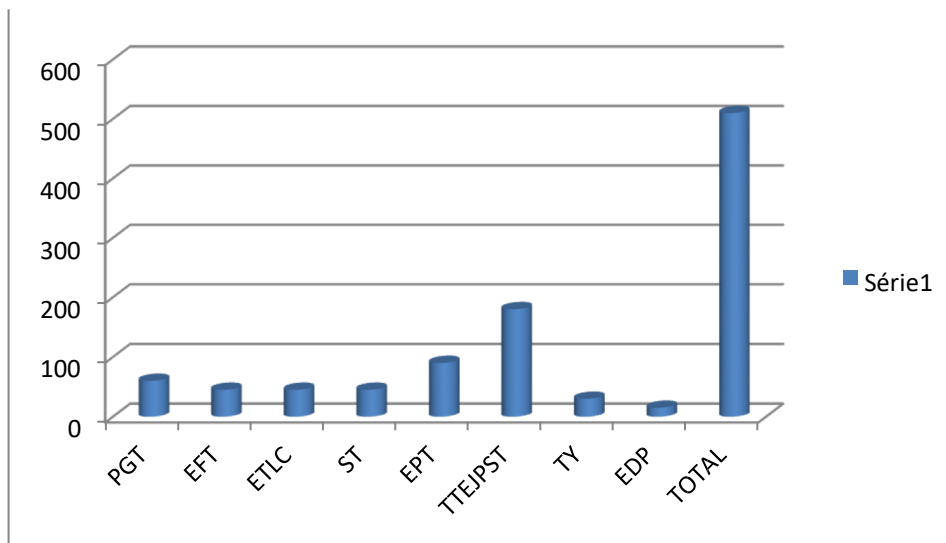


Graphic 14: subjects designed for non-specific language

Finally here by subjects designed for non-specific language are meant subjects which can be taught in either English or French depending on the qualifications at hand. They are currently being taught in French and they obtain 390hours/1440 or 27%.

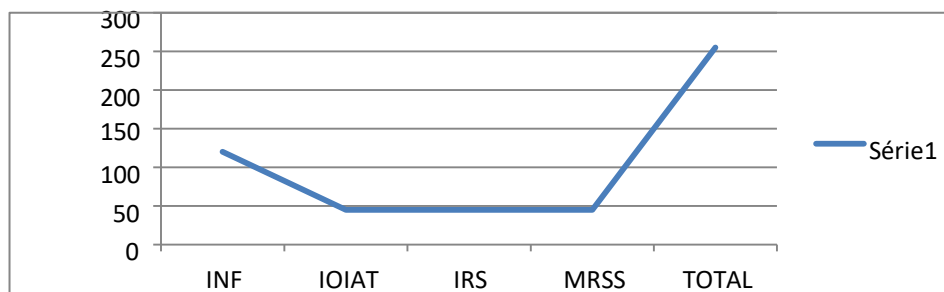
3.1 The extra-linguistic sub-competence: predominantly declarative knowledge. It is made up of encyclopaedic, thematic and bicultural knowledge. Following are the subjects which refer to the extra-linguistic sub-competence:

The translation knowledge sub-competence: predominantly declarative knowledge about translation and aspects of the profession. It is knowledge of the principles that guide translation (processes, methods and procedures, etc.) and the profession (types of translation briefs, users, etc.). Below are subjects which are related to this sub-competence:



Graphic 3: Subjects designed for translation knowledge sub-competence

3.3 *The instrumental sub-competence* : predominantly procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation resources and information and communication technologies applied to translation (dictionaries of all kinds, encyclopaedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic corpora, search engines, etc.). Below are subjects designed for the development of this sub-competence:



Graphic4: subjects designed for the instrumental sub-competence

3.4 *The strategic sub-competence* is procedural knowledge to guarantee the efficiency of the translation process and solve problems encountered. It intervenes by planning the process in relation to translation project, evaluating the process and partial results obtained, activating the different sub-competencies and compensating for deficiencies, identifying translation problems and applying procedures to solve them.

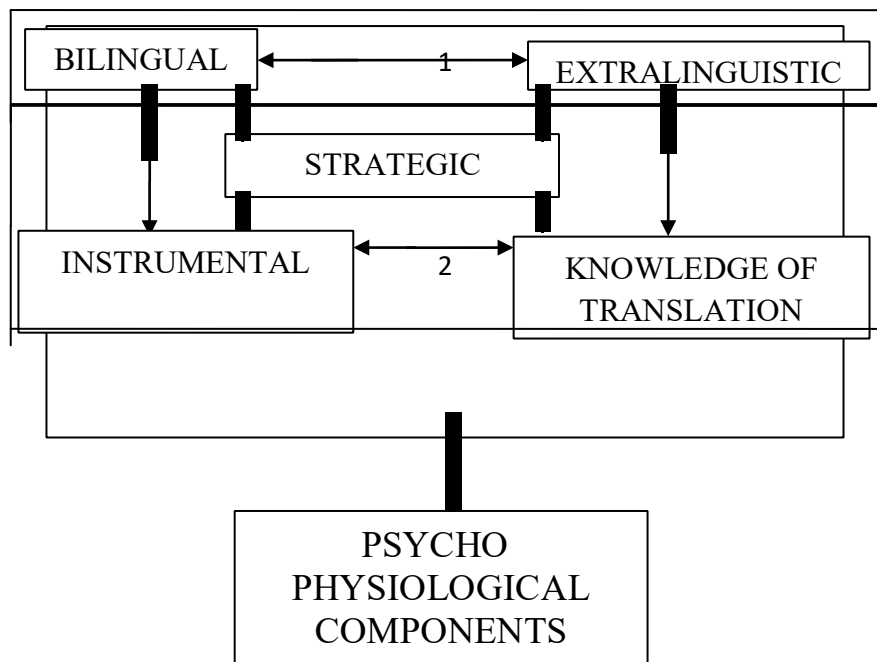


Diagramme 1: the two sub-types of the TC

The two types are both part and parcel of TC; one type cannot bring about desired results without the other. And more importantly as it can be seen from the diagramme, the psycho-physiological components should not be left out of the kit given that a translator is a human being with a mind which is “the playground of any cognition” (Lumbala forthcoming). Clearly stated, the latter component, i.e., the psycho-physiological components supports the acquisition and use of the five sub-competences of the TC.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the national programme as carried out above helps to see what conceptualisation of TC the designers have. It turns out that the programme devotes the great part of it to the development of pre-translation sub-competences; that is, the bilingual and the extra-linguistic (Valentine 1996). These make up the general fold of the TC and are contained in box 1 of diagramme 1 above. Needless to point it out, these sub-competences are a prerequisite to any real translating activity. Some authors have shown their complementarity and indissociability (Gile 2005) to the point of seeing them as constituting the main set (Alves and Gonçalves 2007) of the translator’s competence.

Actually Alves and Gonçalves consider only the bilingual sub-competence to be the main set “since it is expected to function more intensively during the act of translating” (p15). In a study conducted with translation students, Jeanne

Dancette found out the tendency which indicates that if the level of linguistic competence is low, neither extra-linguistic nor comprehension of the text will be enough to compensate for the linguistic gap and as a result, subjects will display incoherent performance patterns. The implication is that “it is only when the linguistic competence reaches a sufficient level that all the abilities and resources of the performers can be put to their best use and converge to produce acceptable translation solutions” (Dancette 2000, p3). What can be kept here is that this is a tendency and not a strong co-relational link between lack of linguistic competence and failure to translate properly. In brief, I am tempted to believe that programme designers conceived it in line with this axiom in mind. That is, the programme is conceived along the thread of thought just described such that the linguistic sub-competence is the main set of the TC.

It can be argued that the obviousness or plainness of the tendency described above has tended to blur the mind of most people outside the circle of TS to the point of not seeing any other sub-competence worth considering. Stated differently, the importance of the linguistic sub-competence tends to prevent outsiders from seeing beyond this as far as the translation competence is concerned. This justifies why even some translation scholars in the early period approached its study from a purely linguistic point of view (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958/1995 cited in Munday 2016). In the light of insights gained from empirical research (Lumbala 2016a; Hurtado Albir and Alves 2009; Kambaja 2009; Halverson 2009, Jabali 2014 to mention but these) the linguistic approach to translation that dominated the early history was called into question for its tendency to overlook the issue of meaning. That is, in this approach, the meaning is considered to be stable across languages, something proved or shown to be turning the other way round. I am tempted to believe that it is the linguistic approach which enlightened the designers of the DRC programme. How could it be otherwise when the entire programme does not offer any explicit course on the meaning issue such as semantics, pragmatics, etc?

Before any further discussion, it is enlightening to draw first of all the table summarizing the percentage each sub-competence obtains in the programme:

Sub-competences	Number of hours	Percentage
Bilingual sub-competence	1440/3090X100	46.6
Extra-linguistic sub-competence	465/3090 X100	15
Translation knowledge subcompetence	510/3090 X100	16.5
Instrumental sub-competence	255/3090 X100	8.2
Strategic sub-competence	0/3090 X100	0
Psycho-physiological sub-competence	0/3090 X100	0
Total	2700/3090 X100	86.3

Table 1: percentage of sub-competences

Examined in the light of the PACTE group model, the two pre-translation subcompetences of the national programme obtain 61.6 or about 2/3 of the overall programme in terms of hourly credit. And this high percentage accorded to the pre-translation subcompetences seems to be an indication that the designers consider them as the main set of the TC (and they actually are).

The bilingual sub-competence was further divided with a view to seeing the place held by each working language (English, French and Portuguese). As evidenced by the percentage obtained by each language, the importance of the English language in the training of Congolese translation learners should be well stressed. In fact, it is reported that the entire world’s published scientific literature is by far in English (about 70% according to an estimate).

As to the specific, KAT (Knowledge about translation) and INSTR (Instrumental subcompetence), they obtain less than 25%. By contrast, the other two sub-competences, i.e., the strategic and the psycho-physiological are overtly ignored. When their importance as elaborated above is considered, it can be said

that the designers took them as granted or implied. It is true that there is some overlap or inclusion of certain few points regarding the strategic sub-competence (for example exercises) in the courses and internship planned. Frankly speaking, a close interpretation in the sense of lending mental states to the designers, brings to the open the fact that all the hours devoted to practice, the internship included are actually intended to develop the strategic sub-competence.

But what strikes anyone's sight is the fact that there is not a single course on psychophysiology, semantics, pragmatics, terminology, lexicography and dictionary using and the like. In other words, the programme seems to turn a blind eye on the translator's self knowledge as an agent, something cognitive approaches focuses on and shows to be crucial.

In view of the figures in the above table, the conceptualisation of the TC is not very far from that outsiders have. That is, the programme emphasizes the development of general subcompetences more than that of the specific to expertise in translation.

Considering the linguistic pyramid of the country and in view of the Constitution of the DRC regarding its translation into the national languages and the loi-cadre of the national education regarding the valorization of the national languages, it becomes evident that the programme is of very little help in this regard. Out of 3090 hours for the entire programme, only 45 hours (i.e., 1.4%, which is a meaningless and negligible percentage) are devoted to the study of the translation into a Congolese language (traduction en langue congolaise). In the absence of any clear indication as to which Congolese language it is, the trainer's mother tongue is likely to be the only possible choice open to him/her. The UNIKIN being the biggest university welcoming learners from all corners of the country, the trainer's mother tongue is likely to bring about some frustration on the part of the learners not knowing it. In this matter Lingala, which enjoys a prestigious status and is highly prized by most Kinshasa residents, has so far been used.

The designers seem to imply that it is not necessary to spend much time learning Congolese languages because already known, thus translating into them would ipso facto be easy. This can be so to some extent for interpreting, not for written translation which is the object of study here because it requires a sound mastery of the writing skills. It is obvious that the Congolese learners of translation are not trained to translate into their national languages.

As far as the translator's directionality is concerned, it is worth noting that the national programme seemingly imposes three foreign languages as the working languages for the trainee translators: English, French and a third foreign language (Portuguese). In this configuration, French would stand as the language

of habitual use, or as the „functional first language“, thus as the Congolese learners“ mother tongue. Translating into English or Portuguese would be considered as inverse translation. If we consider the position strongly defended in the English speaking countries according to which the viable direction is that into the translator“s mother tongue, then it becomes easy to understand that the programme is designed for the trainee translators to be working with English (and/or Portuguese)-French direction. Though professionally justified, this position is thought not to take into consideration the Congolese needs or expectations on different levels such as educational, cultural, medical, pharmaceutical, etc. (Kambaja forthcoming). That is, the translated works remain unknown to the English-French illiterate who make up the vast majority of the population of the DRC.

Another key point which emerges from the analysis of the national programme relates to the instrumental sub-competence. It is not clear what learners can achieve in the use of technologies to carry out translations in this era. Nowadays technologies have been facilitating most tasks and ignoring the systematic training of learners in their use would give the image of a Congolese translator working with a pen and paper, something old-fashioned today. The usefulness of the computer tool in translation is manifold: speed, correction, search of ad hoc information, and the like.

Still, Kambaja (forthcoming) points out two other important challenges not taken into consideration in the training programme; that is, the spirit of teamwork and that of the quality demands. In line with the former, the author writes that

In line with this challenge, one can notice that a true professional training that would enable the trainee translator to embark in teamwork within a firm or a translation agency is missing. It turns out that the curriculum offered does not allow the development of the sub-competence of skills that allow the prospective translator or interpreter to get integrated in the professional universe of translation (p13) (translation my own).

To judge the programme by the way it stands, the general picture that emerges is that of a solitary translator who knows everything. Worth noting is the fact that translator“s work today is not what it used to be. For example, imagine what would be the benefit if the country had qualified translators for the national languages: not only their economical status would increase, but also the quality of information to spread would augment, subsequently peace would reign all over the country (a joke is told of the fall of Kisangani in 1997 due to the miscommunication between Russian pilots and Congolese soldiers).

The teamwork competence is thought to encourage collaborative learning. It is the focus of approaches such as social constructivism which says that people learn better by interacting with one another (Király 2012). In my study conducted in (2016a), students used as test persons reported a feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment with teamwork as they were put together to negotiate the final version. For Kambaja cited above, a course such as “séminaire des problèmes économiques et sociaux” could be used to train the learners to teamwork, for example by collaborating with specialists of the domains indicated. This way they can acquire “local knowledge” necessary in the translating activities (Rubagumya 1993 cited in Mulamba 1993). In line with what I stated earlier, the author (Kambaja) thinks that the strategic subcompetence could be developed on the part of the learners thanks to courses on translation of specialized texts, oral and written expression and TS. These courses also could contribute to quality which is the other challenge to meet in the education of translation learners.

Conclusion

On the whole, an attempt has been made to capture the conceptualisation of the translator competence implied in the training programme designed by the DRC Government for the training of translators in the university. The concept “competence” was first surveyed and the choice made on the competence-based approach to translation programme evaluation, particularly on the model proposed by the PACTE group was justified. Then, courses have been categorized according to the sub-competences of this model they are thought to develop. There then followed a discussion which pointed out the approach which informed the conceptualisation of translation competence and which also referred to some challenges that are to be met in the training of translators.

Notes: 1) The first point, i.e., the translation processes as conceptualized in the DRC translation training programme, has been developed in a separate paper (see Lumbala forthcoming b)

2) The programme evaluated was the one in use between 2004 and 2021 and which is now being replaced progressively with the one from LMD system.

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