HOW SHOULD TRANSLATION COMPETENCE BE TAUGHT: A QUEST FOR A BETTER APPROACH IN TRANSLATION CLASS

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Abstract

It is widely agreed that the main aim of translation education is to develop students' translation competence, therefore most researches in translation education contexts focus on identifying the components of translation competence and appropriate curriculum models that integrate these components with suitable teaching strategies. Since translation competence consists of many sub-competences, developing these sub-competences therefore should be the main consideration in translation education.

This article is aimed at discussing translation competence in general and how this competence should be developed in a translation class context. Understanding these sort of things is important in formulating the best approach in translation teaching and learning in order to avoid the possible overlap between 'translation teaching' and 'language teaching', due to the fact that in some cases what the students get in translation class is not 'how to be a good translator' but 'how to be a good language learner'.

Further, understanding the nature of students' translation competence and how this should be developed can give an important conceptual framework in formulating a better translation curriculum which considers all aspects the students need to build their translation competence.

Keywords*: students, translation, competence, teaching.*

Introduction

Translation is considered as a complex activity since it involves at least two different languages with different system and cultural backgrounds. It also involves different kinds of cognitive processes taking place during a translation task. Therefore, translation is also not merely an act of communication and a textual operation since translation is also the result of the cognitive process carried out by translator (Albir & Alves, 2009:54).

The complexity of translation is not only found at the linguistic level but also at the non-linguistic level and these are the main parameters in achieving translation equivalence. These linguistics and non-linguistic matters should also be considered seriously, since each language has a different grammatical system and a cultural tradition reflected in the language and its use (Toury, 1995:200). Therefore, Bassnett (2002) stated that translation is a series of operations of which the starting point and the end product are significations and functions within a given culture. Cultural issues and context are also become important considerations in translation because a text is the product of a particular socio -cultural context and because language cannot be separated from its cultural context, a text cannot be separated from the facts of its socio-cultural condition (Hatim, 2009; Venuti, 2005).

Since translation is a complex activity, translators are required to possess certain knowledge and skills to ensure they can carry out this task well. Such knowledge and skills is commonly known as translation competence (TC), although in fact some other terms such as translation ability, translation skills, translational competence, translator's competence and translation expertise are also used (Albir & Alves, 2009:63). Possessing appropriate competence will ensure a translator can overcome any problems that occur during translation process. The main questions in understanding translation competence are about the definition and main features of translation competence, the components of translation competence, how translation competence is acquired and the traits which are related to expert knowledge (Albir & Alves, 2009:64).

Translation Competence Models

In general, the term competence is understood as an expert knowledge in a spe-

cific area. Therefore, translation competence can be defined as the underlying system of knowledge required to translate. PACTE (2009) defines translation competence as expert knowledge needed to perform a translation task well. Further, translation competence comprises some inter-related sub-competences. The most important issue in translation competence is about how a model of translation competence is developed. The development of an appropriate translation competence model is crucial in providing a reliable design and material for teaching translation.

There are various models of translation competence. One model of translation competence has been proposed by Presas (1996). Presas (1996) (cited in Orozco and Albir, 2002) proposed a model of translation competence that consists of declarative knowledge and operative knowledge. Presas (1996) believes that translation competence is an ability possess by translators which is governed by their declarative knowledge, the knowledge about what translation is and operative knowledge, the knowledge about how to translate.

Recently the proposals related to the modelling and functioning of translation competence have been dominated by componential models. These models focus on the description of components or sub-competences of written translation (Albir & Alves, 2009:64). According to componential models, translation competence comprises several sub-competences located at different levels. Different models have been provided that define these sub-components in different ways. Componential models describe translation competence as the skills and knowledge required by translators in order to perform a translation work well.

This model believes that translation competence consists of several related sub-competencies such as linguistic competence (knowledge of the languages involved), extra-linguistic competence (knowledge of the culture and contexts involved) and transfer competence (knowledge of translation) (Albir and Alves, 2009). Neubert (2000) has proposed that translation competence consists of five interrelated sub-competences, they are: language competence, textual competence, subject competence, cultural competence and transfer competence.

Language competence related to a translator's knowledge and understanding about the language, since translation in Neubert's opinion is more than a study of languages in contrast. Textual competence relates to a translator's understanding about the text they work with. Having this competence, a translator will not only understand about linguistic feature of the text, but also s/he will be able to identify the textual features of the text. Subject knowledge relates to a translator's specialist knowledge and how to access this knowledge when needed in translation work. Cultural competence will enable the translator to deal with cultural information which is acceptable in the target text readership. Finally, transfer competence relates to a translator ability to employ specific tactics and strategies in translating a text from a source language into a target language.

Another componential model of translation competence is proposed by the Process of Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation (PACTE) group. In the PACTE model, translation competence consists of six interrelated sub-competencies (PACTE, 2011). These sub-competences are as follows:

Bilingual sub-competence

The bilingual sub-competence is knowledge required to communicate in two languages. Since translation involves two different languages with different typologies and systems, the translators' knowledge about both languages plays an important role in overcoming linguistic problems encounter during the translation process.

This sub-competence related to the mastery of both source text and target text. It deals more with linguistics competence since this competence comprises pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge.

Extra-linguistic sub-competence.

This sub-competence mainly relates to translators' understanding about the culture of both languages, knowledge of specific domains and their encyclopaedic knowledge. Understanding the cultural aspects of a language is important for a translator, because a text is produced within a particular socio-cultural background. Extra-linguistic sub-competence will enable a translator to make a clear interpretation about particular or content elements of a cultural

Extra-linguistic sub-competence will enable a translator to make a clear interpretation about particular or content elements of a cultural text in the source language, so that s/he can find the appropriate equivalence of that term in the target language.

Knowledge about translation

This sub-competence mainly deals with the knowledge about the theory and the practice of translation. In order to know about how translation functions, a translator needs to have a sufficient knowledge about the theory of translation. The lack of knowledge about translation theories will affect a translator during the translation process. Knowledge about translation also deals with the practice of translation and the process involved in the translation of a text. This sub-competence will enable a translator to take any appropriate strategies and actions when s/he encounters any problem during translation process.

Instrumental sub competence

This sub-competence deals with the ability in using documentation resources (such a dictionaries or other information resources) and information and communication technologies to support translation. The practice of translation is often aided by any documentation resources and a translator needs to be able to use such documentation appropriately. The development of information technology had also has a significant influence on the practice of the translation. Online resources and electronic corpora are among examples of technological instruments used in translation. Competence in using those resources will help translators to work more accurately.

Strategic sub competence

This sub-competence deals with translator's problem solving ability during the process of translation. This sub-competence serves to control the translation process. Possessing this competence, a translator will be able to plan the process and carry out translation practice appropriately. The strategic sub-competence also helps a translator in evaluating the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose. This competence is also influential in activating different sub-competences and compensates for any shortcomings of the translator as well

as in identifying translation problems and in applying particular procedures to solve them.

Psycho-physiological components.

PACTE also identifies a number of personal characteristics of translators in their model. These components mainly relate to translator's personal psycho-physiological condition, such as perception, attention, emotion intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, creativity and logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis. These psycho-physiological conditions are very influential in translation practice, since translation is a complex activity that relies much on cognitive processes.

Translation Education

Translation education plays an important role in producing competent translators. Competent translators are those who possess good translation competence so they can overcome translation works properly. Therefore developing translation competence has become a central issue to be addressed in translation education since the main aim of translation education is to build translation competence.

Building translation competence in fact is not an easy matter, since translation competence consists of several interrelated sub-competences. Therefore, some problems range from linguistic or language mastery to the lack understanding of translation theory commonly appear in translation education context. A study on translation education in China conducted by Lei (1991) revealed that the problems commonly faced by translation students in China are: (1) unsupportive attitude toward the importance of translation; (2) weak bilingual foundation; (3) problems in rethoric and style; and (4) problems in using translation resources. Such problems need to be addressed seriously in order to ensure the acquisition of translation competence in translation education context can progress well.

As the main aim of translation education is to develop students' translation competence, most research in translation education contexts focuses on identifying the components of translation competence and appropriate curriculum models that integrate these components with suitable teaching strategies (Campbell and Hale, 2003:205). In other words, in a translation education context, the discussion focuses on how translation compe-

tence is learned and is taught (Chesterman, 2000). As a consequence, translation teachers need to know what the components of translation competence are so that they can teach them. Since translation competence consists of many sub-competences, developing these sub-competences should be a main consideration in translation education. In addition, finding the suitable teaching design and materials to develop these sub-competences is also the main concern of translation education.

Li (2002) suggested that in a translation education context, there are three things to be considered, they are: a needs assessment in order to make an appropriate curriculum planning and development; language teaching being stressed in the translation programme; and the theory of translation be designed in such a way it can better accomodate the students' needs. Li (2007) also argued that any translation program should pay attention to how to strengthen students' acquisition of translation skills as well as how to improve students' English language and knowledge base.

Many scholars believed that translation competence is a skill, therefore like any other skills, translation can be learned. Translation competence can be developed through a particular treatment and process, and an academic institution is considered the best place to develop translation competence (Schaffner and Adab, 2000). Similar to Schaffner and Adab, Lorscher (1992) also argued that translation competence is the result of a continuous developmental process which is never final. This proses of development mainly focuses on developing transfer competence so that a translator is able to transfer text equivalently on various level according to a certain commission by regarding several factors such as sense, communicative function, style, and text type.

As a continuous process which is never final, translation competence is acquired through different phases, from novice to expert knowledge level or often called as expertise (Albir & Alves, 2009:66). This means that the acquisition of translation competence is not an instant process that happens at once. Such competence is acquired along with the process of translation education and translation practice. Orozco and Albir (2002), following the model of learning progress developed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) have divided

the phases of translation competence acquisition into five, they are: novice, advance beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise.

Conclusion

As have been noted in the discussion above, translation competence refers to certain skills and knowledge that should be possessed by a translator in order to perform translation work appropriately. Translation competence consists of some sub-competences that relate to each other therefore developing translation competence can be achieved by developing sub-competences such as bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistics sub competence, knowledge about translation, instrumental sub-competence, strategic sub-competence, and psycho-physiological components.

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