

BOOK REVIEW

Translation Competence: Theory, Research and Practice

Written by Carla Quinci, New York: Routledge, 2023. (ISBN 9781032130217).

Received: 20 November 2024; Revised: 10 February 2025; Published: 24 April 2025

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As an underlying system of knowledge and skills, translation competence (TC) means applying translation knowledge, methods and skills to effectively achieve communication, generally including bilingual ability, non-linguistic competence (such as encyclopedia knowledge, subject knowledge), instrumental competence, etc. For years, how TC is defined has been a hot debate and experts have been divided on how to improve TC. The book, *Translation Competence: Theory, Research and Practice*, addresses this topic and gives new insights into TC and its development from three perspectives: theory, research and practice, establishing a framework for the profile of a competent translator and the design of educational syllabus.

The volume comprises eight chapters divided into three major sections: theory, research, and practice. In the first section (Chapters 1-2), Quinci begins by discussing and contrasting previous research on definitions and models to trace TC's development, while also explaining the differences between TC and specialized knowledge. The author also comprehensively reviews the five most prominent models that outline the acquisition of TC, elucidating the various competences, situational aspects, and behavioral patterns.

The second section (Chapters 3-7) focuses on research. First, an empirical longitudinal investigation was designed, containing a research question, a sample of translation trainees and well-experienced translators, and a questionnaire. Additionally, two different approaches have been adopted in this study: one offers a synchronic analysis of translators' performance with different levels of TC, and the other uses a diachronic perspective to trace their development. Next, it shifts to textual patterns to explore relations between translators with different levels of TC and textual patterns. In the process, the author conducted the descriptive analysis of product-related data (i.e., lexical density and variation, length variation, and syntactic variation), aiming to identify possible textual patterns associated with specific levels of TC. These patterns are linked to the qualitative analysis of the target texts. To map onto TC, translation quality and errors were assessed with two sets of criteria adopted in the professional and academic worlds: adequacy and acceptability; accuracy and readability. Furthermore, two different classifications of errors and a severity scale were combined to define three levels based on error frequency (i.e., "critical", "major", and "minor") and four translation levels (i.e., A–Superior; B–Acceptable; C–Revisable; D–Unacceptable). Finally, the process-related analysis served as the



complementary evidence. It included recording the needed time for translators at three TC levels (novice, intermediate, and well-experienced), which helps to formulate the practical guidelines and their challenges based on training experience.

The third section concludes with Chapter 8, focusing on how the key findings from the empirical study can be applied to translator training. Quinci presents their main tasks in three phases, i.e., orientation, drafting, and revision. Drawing on the primary trends and conclusions, she illustrates the general guidelines of not just content, but measures in translation training. Suggestion is made that reading should be improved greatly, as it involves both reference materials and the emerging and/or completed target text so as to promote text comprehension. The top priority is given to the notions of rewording and wording, potential risks, and information literacy, as these elements can improve translation quality, avoid errors, and promote efficiency.

Valuable conclusions are drawn from a large number of sample studies and analyses and the latest trends are noted. For example, novice translators tend to focus on micro-level features like lexical richness, length variation, and various syntactic structures (p. 106). They typically exhibit a scarcity of self-awareness, poor time-management, overconfidence as well as exposure to risk (p. 203). Conversely, well-experienced translators prioritize macro-level features like accuracy, acceptability, and readability. As for intermediates, they are between novices and well-experienced translators. All these indirectly provide new insights into grasping TC.

The most prominent merit of this book is its methodological design (i.e., triangulation). In order to delve more precisely and comprehensively into what factors affect TC, the author quantifies these factors through data analysis and comparison across multiple levels, like product- and process-oriented analyses. This approach offers a more accurate, reliable, and objective measurement. Moreover, it facilitates the observation of invisible factors, such as lexical density. From an application perspective, this volume serves as a valuable guide for future translator training and teaching. In other words, this volume clarifies not only what, but how one should do. For example, a trend observed in this book indicates that novices tend to employ a wealth of elaborate vocabulary and the most complex syntactic structures, ultimately leading to the least readable translation. Novices and intermediates also present different deficiencies in confidence, self-monitoring, and exposure to risk. In fact, these deficiencies are also observed among bilinguals who are considered as novices and intermediates to some degree, because they do not receive any professional training and only rely on self-learning. A recently published book, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Bilingualism*, also shows how bilinguals can become well-experienced translators or interpreters in the last two chapters. However, Wang and Zhang (2023) only display an overview on training bilinguals to become interpreters, and explain how interpreting is seen as a bilingual's innate skill. In addition, Pavlović and Whyatt (2023) mainly focus on the pedagogy commonly used in translation. They do not give out concrete measures like lexical choices, syntactic structures, or even fluency. With this volume, not only will beginners or intermediates learn to avoid and correct these mistakes according to the conclusions, but bilinguals can get valuable references and clear directions for further career development. On the project's scale, this research provides diverse samples and materials, along with a wide range of variables, which contribute to its accuracy and mitigates uncertainties. Previous empirical studies on TC consist of case studies with fewer participants like PACTE's study and *TransComp*. While this study not only involves 63 participants, but boasts a parallel corpus of approximately 100,000 tokens,



which is made up of 239 authentic translations divided into six different sub-corpora. The significant amount of samples can offer valuable guidelines and references to corpus linguistics. In terms of its impact on other fields, this book enhances the development of cognitive translation and interpreting studies (CTIS), which explains “what is going on in the translator’s head.” Cognitively, when language and cultural knowledge in a translator’s head is activated, the translator constantly uses relevant cognitive strategies to ensure the coherence of textual meaning. The recommended book introduces orientation, drafting, revising, and even their preferences for words and sentences, which demonstrates parallel processing and meta-cognitive monitoring. It also records the translation mistakes from their performance, which is an exact reflection of cognitive thinking. Given that this book does provides research materials for CTIS.

However, there is room for improvement in this research project. First, the author primarily concentrates on variables that influence the translation process or product, while neglecting the translators themselves. Specifically, cognitive abilities and psychological factors are conspicuously absent from the project, which means the project is unable to reflect the acquisition of TC in a psychologically plausible manner. For example, without the investigation into their minds and experiences, translators may adopt different words or sentences through their preferences or habits, which ultimately undermine the validity of trends or conclusions in the process of translation. Second, it falls short of human-computer collaboration. This research project mainly draws conclusions related to TC through translation tasks executed by translators at three distinct levels. To elaborate further on the matter, whether it is a questionnaire or a product analysis, its reliance on human participants inevitably introduces subjectivity such as their preferences and affects the empirical findings. In order to advance research in this field, it is necessary to incorporate human-computer collaboration as a way to enhance the research dimensions for more reliable outcomes. Considering AI’s growing role in translation, technologies like eye-tracking technology may help to eliminate human bias, ensuring more impartial results.

All in all, this book conceptualizes TC drawing on a wide range of studies, significantly expediting the learning process, and offering useful guidelines to predict and prevent unsuccessful translation behaviors. Therefore, it is worth recommending.

Declarations and Acknowledgment:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.



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About the Author:

Gang Wu graduated with a Master of Translation and Interpreting from Guangdong University of Science and Technology. He has cooperated with other researchers and published papers related to foreign language teaching at academic conferences. Currently, he is teaching at the School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, China. His research interests primarily focus on applied linguistics, translation and interpreting, and second language acquisition.

