TOWARDS A TRANSLATOR COMPETENCE MODEL
FOR VIETNAMESE CONTEXT:
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*

Vuong Thi Thanh Nhan**

*VNU University of Languages and International Studies,
Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Abstract: Translation competence, as the fundamental objective of any translation program, has been a subject of interest in Translation Studies for decades. Developing a translation competence model eminently suitable for the local industry is a crucial step towards the professionalization of the translation market in Vietnam. This paper presents a critical review of current literature on translation competence, its acquisition and various translation competence models with reference to the context of Vietnam. An in-depth analysis from the article is expected to give specific recommendations for policy-makers, translation educators, translation service users and translation practitioners to strive for the common goal of a professionalized industry.

Keywords: translation/ translator competence, translation competence acquisition, translation competence models

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been widespread agreement amongst experts in Translation Studies that translation is a complex cognitive activity, involving expertise in a number of areas and skills (Schafner & Adab, 2000). Although developing translation competence is widely seen as a fundamental objective of any translation program, the fact that translation is a "multi-dimensional phenomenon" may explain why there have been few attempts to validly and reliably measure translation competence (Angelelli & Jacobson, 2009). The study of translation competence and its acquisition is relatively new compared to other disciplines.

Early works on translation competence started in the mid-1980s and became prominent in the 1990s when the first models were proposed by Bell (1991), Neubert (1994), Kiraly (1995), Cao (1996), Hansen (1997), etc. However, they mainly dealt with translation competence tangentially as few authors emphasized the importance of its strategic component. Empirical-experimental studies of written translation during this period only examined partial aspects of translation competence's components rather than focusing on its entirety. As we cross into the new millennium, the number of research on translation competence has increased considerably with a more interdisciplinary framework established.

** Corresponding author.
  Email address: vuongnhan11@gmail.com
  https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4888

In recent years, a new pedagogical model of competence-based training which features an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment has been advocated. With its foundations in cognitive constructivist and socio-constructivist learning theories, this training model aims at making learning more meaningful for trainees by integrating common practices of the relevant professional profile into the training curriculum. According to Hurtado Albir (2015), the translators and interpreters' professional profile, essentially defined by analyzing emerging practices in the labor market, will help identify the competences required in the training process. Do (2015, 2016), Le (2017) and Hoang (2020) reaffirmed the crucial role of designing a market-oriented curriculum for translator education in Vietnam. But it is important to point out the socio-cultural differences between the working environment for translators and interpreters across the world and how they determine the way translation competence is conceptualized and evaluated in its own context.

It is worth considering that the official interpreter-translator training in Vietnam at tertiary level has emerged since the 2000s but it was largely influenced by the pedagogical approach of foreign language teaching (Le, 2017). The latest international conference on *Translation 4.0: Research, Training and Practice* held in October 2020 at the University of Languages and International Studies (Vietnam National University, Hanoi) highlighted that the absence of a state-level association for translation profession, accompanied by the lack of professional profile for translators-interpreters, has exaggerated the inadequacies in translator education. No clear criteria for measuring translator and interpreter competence have inevitably entailed learning outcomes for translator training programs which can hardly respond to the market needs. These shortcomings have posed an urgent need for upcoming studies to construct the professional profile which describes specific competences for Vietnamese practitioners in the field.

This article is a review of the literature about developing translation competence model with a particular emphasis on the Vietnamese context. Following the general discussion on translation competence models across the world, it critically analyses the Vietnamese current situation to illustrate. Hopefully, the paper will be of reference for policy-makers, translation scholars and translator educators who are enthusiastically working towards the professionalization of the local translation industry.

2. A Review of Current Literature on Translation Competence

This section will specifically and selectively examine some common theories to conceptualize translation competence and describe the process of translation competence acquisition. A systematic investigation of proposed translation competence models from different perspectives will be provided. This is followed by the analysis of the Vietnamese translation market to date, highlighting the need for developing a context-based translator competence model.

2.1. Translation Competence and Translation Competence Acquisition

2.1.1. Defining Translation Competence

In addition to studying translation (as a product, process and behavior), Translation Studies have also been concerned in recent decades with competences that enable translators to perform the task required by professional settings. This competence identifies the translators and "distinguishes them from the non-translators" (Hurtado Albir, 2017). In

fact, the notion of competence has enjoyed a long history of analysis in other disciplines such as Applied Linguistics, Work Psychology and Pedagogy but one of the most complete definitions is the one put forward by Lasnier (as cited in Hurtado Albir, 2017) in which he views competence as "a complex *know how to act* resulting from integration, mobilization and organization of a combination of capabilities and skills (which can be cognitive, affective, psycho-motor or social) and knowledge (declarative knowledge) used efficiently in situations with common characteristics". The current study adopts this definition as it can depict the complex and multifarious nature of competence, which is not merely limited to declarative knowledge (know what) and operative knowledge (know how), but it can be acquired by doing and applying knowledge in an efficient manner (know how to act).

Correspondingly, *translation competence* is viewed and defined differently over the last thirty years by various authors in Translation Studies. The perception of this competence changed from a "bilingualism mode" to a "multi-componential competence" which comprises sets of technological, cultural, or linguistic skills (Lowe, 1987; Bell, 1991; Pym, 1992; Kiraly, 1995; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Hansen, 1997; Neubert, 2000; Pym, 2003). Nevertheless, the effort exerted by PACTE Group (2000, 2003 & 2005) is the most evidently determined for defining the term. Their empirical-experimental researches have described translation competence as "the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be able to translate" (2000, p. 100). They also highlight four unique features of translation competence. First, it is an *expert knowledge* that is not attributed to all bilinguals. Second, it is basically *procedural* rather than *declarative knowledge*. Third, it is composed of numerous *interrelated sub-competencies*;

Fourth, the *strategic component* is central. There is clearly a consensus amongst scholars that translation competence is a mixture of different knowledge, skills and attributes and it is not a feature of any bilingual.

One of the useful but seemingly polemical distinctions was made by Kiraly (2000) between "translation competence" and "translator competence", developed after that by Bernadini (2004) as a broad difference between "translator training" and "translator education". As Pym (2009) elaborated, "translator training" is associated with translation competence (mostly linguistic skills) and the acquisition of which will always be a combination of instruction and practice. "Translator education", on the other hand, recognizes the need for students to acquire a wide range of interpersonal skills and attitudes (translator competence), in addition to the purely technical skills. Students must be taught not just how to do things; rather, they must become members of the various overlapping professional communities engaged in the production of translations. This approach shed a new light on defining key objectives for long-term training programs. Although "translation competence" and "translator competence" are used interchangeably in some of the literature, they may refer to two slightly different concepts, which are explained in the next sections.

2.1.2. Acquisition of Translation Competence

As certain authors (Campell, 1998; Waddington, 2000, as cited in PACTE group, 2020) state, no model of translation competence can be complete without encompassing the translation competence acquisition process. Some of the prominent models brought forward are: Harris's natural translation (1980), Toury (1995) with the model of the process whereby a bilingual becomes a translator (also known as

"socialization as concerns translating"); Chesterman's five stages of translation expertise (1997) referred to as novice stage, advanced beginner stage, competence stage, proficiency stage, expertise stage; PACTE Group's model describes translation competence acquisition as a process of restructuring and development ranging from novice knowledge (pre-translation competence) to expert knowledge (translation competence). This process also highlights the importance of strategic competence (Hurtado Albir, 2007).

As observed, all the aforementioned authors agree that translation competence is an acquired rather than innate ability, and that its acquisition is a cyclical process that goes from an initial stage to a stage of competence consolidation. Although empirical knowledge of what they are and how they work is lacking, understanding these essential features would form the basis for building a comprehensive and relevant translation model in a given context. Furthermore, sufficient insights into the stages of translation competence acquisition will favor the development of a logically sequenced curriculum for translator education.

2.2. The Need for Developing Translation Competence Models

The salient features of the 21st century professional translation world, such as technologization, globalization and collaboration, have undoubtedly pushed translators to upgrade their skills toolkit to survive in the ever-changing and competitive market (Wu, Zhang & Wei, 2019). For over thirty years now, a number of new skills and sub-competences have emerged. In his manual for new translators, Daniel Gouadec (as cited in Sakwe, 2015) reports that the new translator must in fact be ready to become "an information management expert, technician, terminologist, phraseologist, translator,

adapter, proofreader, reviser, quality control expert, post-editor, editor, graphic design expert and Web page designer, technical writer, Website designer, Web page integrator, file manager, macro-command writer and in some cases IT specialist, all rolled into one". The shift of requirements on translators has been consequently addressed by several authors such as Bowker (2002) and Pym (2005). They postulated that the conditions of modern translation professional life as well as the impact of globalization are challenges for translator training, as learners need to possess these new skills in order to be able to confront them.

From a didactic perspective, it was reported by Piotrowska (2015) that Translation Pedagogy, developing at the break of the 21st century and greatly expanding in translation teaching methodologies, has been undergoing important paradigm shifts and methodological changes, in that "it has moved from conventional transmissionist teacher-centred approaches to experiential and professionally-oriented learning models" (p. 16). This evolution thus posed considerable challenges to translator training which must help would-be translators develop the necessary competences to perform well in their future working environment. Within this context, a new pedagogical model has emerged known as "competence-based training". Hurtado Albir (2007) believes that the fundamental advances represented by competence-based training are: greater transparency of professional profile in study programs, greater emphasis on the outcome of learning, more flexibility and a greater integration of all aspects of a curriculum. In competence-based training, the notions of "professional profile" or "professional competences" are evidently the main yardstick for developing guidelines in curriculum design.

In the case of translation profession,

the "translator's profile" is not to be confused with how well anyone translates. It concerns the perception of a translator's value – what employers think a particular translator can do, and how well or badly the translator is assumed to do it. A "profile" can be regarded as a summary of the competences, which are considered necessary in order to function in a given professional context (Sakwe, 2015). It should be noted that different working contexts may define the set of necessary requirements for the translators. For example, the competences needed for translators during the pandemic can differ from that previously, or the European markets may have some pre-conditions which are not similar to the Asian's. Needless to say, the goal to professionalize the Vietnamese translation industry can be reached on condition that high priority is given to the development of a market-oriented translator competence model.

2.3. Various Translation Competence Models Across the World

Translation competence, as the cornerstone of Translation Studies, has been evolving from partial research to holistic and empirical models (Eser, 2015). Research into translation competence attempts to respond to the needs of translation didactics as well as translation sector. This paper, therefore, gives an overall analysis of the models of translation competence which study the concept as a multi componential term from three major perspectives: translation research, translation education and translation profession. This way of division doesn't necessarily indicate three independent approaches, rather, it shows how they are intricately bound up with each other.

2.3.1. Translation Competence Models for Education Purposes

To some extent, the prevalence of

multi-componential translation competence models can be attributed to the proliferation of translator training programs. In translation course design, the sub-competencies in multi-componential models often appear as learning objectives for translation students. For example, Schäffner (2000) and her colleagues proposed six translation sub-competences for translator trainees in their four-year undergraduate program in Modern Languages with Translation Studies: *linguistic competence*, *cultural competence*, *textual competence*, *domain/ subject specific competence*, *(re)search competence, and transfer competence*.

Similarly, for the purpose of translation curricular design, Kelly (2005) listed seven areas of competence for translation graduates corresponding to necessary knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes including: *communicative and textual competence* in at least two languages and cultures, *cultural and intercultural competence*, *subject area competence*, *professional and instrumental competence*, *attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence*, *interpersonal competence*, and *strategic competence*.

Also from the pedagogical viewpoint, Gonzalez Davies and Scott-Tennent (2005) put forward six aspects that a translator should master: *language work* (in both languages), *subject matter* (encyclopedic knowledge related to different disciplines), *translation skills* (paper, electronic and human), *computer skills* and *professional skills* (translator's rights, contracts, etc.).

These multi-componential models, although can inform the identification of learning objectives in translation education, are often narrowly limited to a certain course module or subject field. Moreover, researches that are based largely on propositions or anecdotal experience of

translator trainers or practitioners have been criticized for the lack of empirical support (Hurtado Albir & Alves, 2009; Pym, 2013), and therefore has been viewed as "simple speculations" (Lesznyák, 2007).

2.3.2. Translation Competence Models for Research Purposes

More recently, research in translation has relied on empirical data derived from the behaviours and mental activities of professional translators and/or translator trainees to identify the components of translation competence, using instruments such as think aloud protocols, questionnaires, observations, keystroke logs and screen recordings (Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2008; Quinci, 2015). Several translation competence models have been tested using such techniques, among which two of the most frequently mentioned are those by the PACTE Group (2003) and Göpferich (2009).

PACTE Group (2003) studied translation as a communicative activity and viewed translation competence from two perspectives using both qualitative and quantitative methods to triangulate data. They categorized the translation competence sub-competences as *Bilingual sub-competence* which comprises pragmatic knowledge, sociolinguistic knowledge, textual knowledge, and grammatical-lexical knowledge; *Extra-linguistic sub-competence* that is comprised of bicultural knowledge, encyclopedic knowledge, and subject knowledge, knowledge about translation sub-competence; *Instrumental sub-competence* relating to the use of documentation sources and the information and communication technologies for translation; *Strategic sub-competence* which helps guarantees the effectiveness of translation process and solves encountered problems. This essential component is believed to control the whole translation

process: *psycho-physiological competence* or the mixture of cognitive and attitudinal components types and psycho-motor mechanisms.

In the same vein, Göpferich (2009) offers a model of translation competence based on the PACTE Group's, which consists of *strategic competence and motivation*, *communicative competence* in at least two languages, *domain competence*, *psychomotor competence*, *translation routine activation competence*, *tools and research competence*.

These models have been supported to various degrees by empirical data on translators' behaviours and cognitive processing, but they primarily study the competences translators need to translate a text to a required standard. They "marginalize, or neglect, the competences that translators also rely on as professionals in the translation industry" (Biel, 2011, as cited in Wu, Zhang, Wei, 2019). In other words, this strand of research reflects an underlying epistemology that views translation primarily as a cross-lingual activity and that "overlooks the important vocational nature of translation as a business or professional service". Consequently, they "are forever condemned to lag behind both technology and the market" (Pym, 2013).

2.3.3. Translation Competence Models for Professional Purposes

Bearing the above research strand, the concept of *translator competence* by Kiraly (1995, 2000) has emerged to highlight the professional competence that translators need as practitioners in the modern translation market. Kiraly (1995) points out that "in choosing the term *translator competence*, emphasis is placed on the complex nature of the professional translator's task and the nonlinguistic skills that are required". This emphasis on professional aspects may be a response to the challenges of the market facing translators,

such as performing non-traditional, language-related tasks (Kiraly, 2006) and having flexibility, creativity, independence of thinking, and problem-solving skills (Baer and Koby, 2003), as well as mastering the latest tools used in translation (Olvera-Lobo, 2007). This viewpoint is crucial in designing a translator training curriculum which can well respond to the market needs.

Accordingly, some models of translator competence (Kiraly, 2006, 2013; EMT Expert Group, 2017) have been introduced. For instance, Kiraly (2006, 2013) argues that as well as translation competence *per se*, professional translators require *personal competence* and *social competence* to succeed in the professional translation market. The EMT Expert Group (2017) proposed a more detailed and hierarchical model of translator competence which defined five areas of competences, including *language and culture competence (transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness and communication skills), translation competence (strategic, methodological and thematic competence), technology (tools and applications), personal and interpersonal competence*, and *service provision competence.*

In an attempt to internationalize its accreditation system, NAATI (2015) also introduced a competency model of translator and interpreter which covers a set of KSAs (knowledge, skills and attributes). In considering the terminology related to their work, NAATI prefers using the term "competency" to "competence" as the former refers *to* KSAs that successful people have while the latter indicates "measurable, specific and objective milestones describing what people have to accomplish to consistently achieve or exceed the goals for their role". There are eight interrelating components to be assessed, including *language competency in two languages, intercultural competency, research competency, technological competency,*

thematic competency, transfer competency, service provision competency, ethical competency. Although these sub-competences are used for both translators and interpreters, the specific skills and attributes for the two are essentially different due to their task performance requirements. Recent analysis revealed that there were significant areas of commonality between NAATI and other the internationally-recognized certification bodies, such as EMT (European Master of Translation), ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting in the UK), ATA (American Translator Association), CATTI (China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters), JTA (Japan Translation Association). However, what distinguishes those competence models pertain to their purposes of certification, entry requirements (on language skills and candidates' portfolio), conditions for accreditation at different levels, etc. There is widespread agreement that the certifying bodies, which can be owned by either academic institutions or professional associations, play an essential role in guaranteeing the professionalization of the translation industry. Nonetheless, previously published studies on the translation competence levels are not consistent and few writers have been able to draw on any systematic research into contextualized accreditation for professional translators and interpreters.

It is worth noting that although the competences in all these models are labelled and formulated differently, they both place professionally related competences at the same level as translation competence. Even though the placement of the competences does not necessarily imply that one is prioritized relative to the others, these models are similar in that they "represent a change in epistemology and both view translation as a cross-lingual as well as a vocational activity" (Wu, Zhang, Wei, 2019). It is argued, therefore, that from a

multi-componential point of view, translator competence is either an expansion of translation competence or a combination of the multi-components of translation competence and professional competence, all of which are essential for translators.

Pedagogically, such a profession-oriented approach can help translator trainers set training objectives and assess trainees' competence development (Way, 2008; García González & Veiga Díaz, 2015; Quinci, 2015). It can be used as a framework of reference for translator trainees to identify the knowledge and skills they have acquired and those they need to develop. For translation researchers, especially those using empirical approaches, it helps determine what exactly needs to be investigated. Therefore, the current article takes a multi-componential perspective and uses the term *translator competence* for review and analysis (Wu, Zhang, Wei, 2019).

In summary, this section has reviewed different approaches, each of which offers a different perspective to capture the concepts of translation competence and how it is acquired and developed, with a number of relevant models as references. However, the problem is, each context with its own social, economic, and ideological features may create different market requirements for translators. The next section will specifically analyze the Vietnamese context as an example for illustration.

2.4. The Context of Vietnam: The Translation Industry and Translator Education

Vietnam's GDP reached more than USD 340 billion in 2020, making it the fourth largest economy in Southeast Asia, according to the IMF World Economic Outlook. In the context of strengthening diplomacy, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation of Vietnam with other countries,

"society is in dire need of a translation force of excellence both in terms of quantity and quality" (Nghiem, 2020). As a result, research and training on translation to meet with social demand in this area is a necessity. In fact, interests in the translation industry of Vietnam have grown for decades. Prominent issues in question during the first two decades of the 21st century, however, only restricted to the link between market demands and translator training. For example, Nguyen (2005), Lam (2007), Pham and Ton (2007), Tran (2007, as cited in Do, 2015) made their great effort to point the challenges of foreign language universities to train qualified translators. Nonetheless, specific recommendations on the training programs have not been made until then.

Recently, the issues on domestic translation industry have continued to receive attention in several works. Hoang's journal article (2020) on "Translation Profession Status in Vietnam" gives an overview on the status of the translation profession in Vietnam by analyzing documentary and empirical data and to demonstrate the degree of professionalization of the profession and the indicators of an official profession. The results suggest that although definite steps have been taken on the way to professionalization from the academic context, there is still a lack of professionalization from the domestic market in Vietnam where translation is only seen as a "semi-profession". Until now, no direct legal instrument has been introduced to define the profession's requirements and the indirect documents also were not enough to distinguish between language teachers and translators/interpreters. Qualifications required to enter the profession are not specified. One of the most conspicuous findings is that no association relating to translation has been established to promote translators' rights and to bring stakeholders together. The author attributed the lack of

certification or any other tool for earning credibility to the misunderstanding/de-qualification of the translation profession. The paper, however, has not treated translators' competence in accordance with the profession status in much detail.

Similarly, with her keen interest in translator education, Do (2015, 2018, 2019, 2020) have conducted a number of studies investigating various issues, namely the role of translator competence in educating professional translators with the case of University translation program in Vietnam (2015); the multi-perspective approach to translation practice and translation pedagogy with data from language services sectors and University translator training programs in Australia and Vietnam (2018); the development of graduate's employability with the case of University translation programs in Vietnam (2019); and the link between translator's work requirements and graduates' preparedness with data from Australia and Vietnam (2020). Findings from her researches which mostly concern pedagogical implications for translator trainers and program developers correspond very aptly with the socio-constructivist approach to translator education. Nonetheless, there is still considerable uncertainty with regard to the successful integration of translator competence development into the training process.

To provide an insight into market situation, Nghiem (2020) conducted a survey research using questionnaires and in-depth interviews with representatives of organizations, enterprises that use translation services and training institutions in the North, South and Central of Vietnam. Reflecting upon the findings of the study, it was recommended that translation training should not be conducted in a "massive manner". Instead, there is a need to develop a code of conduct for the practice of translation and to mainstream this code into the training. The study also investigated the

society's requirements and expectations on translators and interpreters' competencies (i.e., bilingual proficiency, professional behavior, general and specialized knowledge). However, this significant aspect has been dealt with to a very limited extent since there is no specific description on these sub-components, how they are assessed and introduced in the academic curriculum.

Regarding the trends, directions and challenges in translator education in Vietnam, Le (2017, 2020) agreed with the abovementioned scholars that the local translator training today is being carried out in an asystematic fashion. He scrutinizes significant challenges for the translator education in Vietnam, namely: the acute shortage of theoretical background for practice; the unreasonable absence of an independent organization for translation and interpreting accreditation; the mismatch between academic programs and market demands; and the lack of professional training for trainers; the inadequate awareness of administrative organizations and leaders at different levels about translation profession. He also calls for "reliable empirical studies undertaken by translation scholars and trainers in Vietnam" to tackle these knotty issues in translator education. Specifically, the author stresses the following issues to put back on the agenda: a massive survey research on Vietnamese translation market to identify the current situation; necessary competences for translators working specifically in Vietnamese translation industry; evaluation and assessment of translation competences via training process and certification; training of trainers; professionalization of the translation industry, among others. These studies, despite being rarely found evidence on translator education in Vietnam, have opened new paths for further research discussing macro-level issues.

3. Towards the Development of Translator Competence for Vietnamese Context

The development of a good translator competence model will undoubtedly take time and efforts, requiring close coordination between various stakeholders (Le, 2017). The following sections will present some steps to take as recommendations for policy makers and relevant parties in the arenas of administration, education, and translation industry.

3.1. Market Research to Identify the Demand of Vietnamese Translation Industry

The market demand for translation is often cited as a determinant on the way translators should be trained as the ultimate aim of translator education, ideally, is employability and preparing qualified graduates for the market (Pym, 2009; Piotroska, 2015). Although there have been a plethora of different translation competence models, some of their components or sub-competences are driven by the local factors, i.e., how the domestic industry is operating, how socio-economic factors are exerting influences on the translation profession. It is therefore crucial to conduct a comprehensive market research on the translator competence requirements as the first step. This will serve as the basis for establishing a translator profile, guiding the training process and working towards the professionalization of the translation industry in Vietnam. However, an equally important question is operationalizing the term "market" in the research process. Although figures are of utmost importance when it comes to markets, statistics relating to the translation market in any specific region must be approached with extreme caution (Gouadec, 2007) for the following reasons: (a) it is impossible to identify all practicing translators, either because many

are not officially registered, or because they are lumped together with other professional categories; (b) those carrying out the surveys are often unfamiliar with the translation industry and may therefore make the wrong assumptions when extrapolating figures; (c) authors of surveys and reports often tend to copy what previous surveys have reported; (d) in most surveys, the turnover generated by sub-contractors is counted twice: on their own account and as part of their work providers' accounts; (e) one should not overlook related jobs and activities in support of translators and localizers (administrative and support staff, integrators, printers, publishers, project managers, etc.). This being said, translation markets are essentially complex. Any market segment is a combination of hierarchically organized features and the translation markets may be rightly defined as a sum of innumerable market segments, some clearly identified, other more hazy. Consideration is therefore needed of *language pair* and *direction of translation*, *territory*, *degree of specialization*, *category*, *context*, *scale*, *accessibility*, *volume*, and *scope of service* when it comes to market research in translation.

Also, the mode of translation (written translation versus oral translation/ interpreting) is another factor deserving careful consideration as these two market segments are at large quite distinct. Regarding translation and interpreting, language transfer, to the outsider, is the most obvious common feature, making these activities seem like close siblings. Many leading theorists of interpreting and translation view them as branches of a single overarching profession or academic discipline known as "Translation Studies" (Pöchhacker, 2004; Gile, 2009, as cited in Setton & Dawrant, 2016). This may be convenient in a broad taxonomy of academic disciplines, but "as cognitive tasks, and therefore for training, written translation and

interpreting are different enough in terms of input, conditions of practice, output, reception and use to be treated as distinct activities and skillsets". That's why the discussion of competences for both translators and interpreters falls outside the scope of this paper, rather, its focus is only placed on competence models for written translators. A closer look at the interpreting market segment would serve as a continuous spur to future research.

3.2. Working Towards a Model of Translator Competence for Vietnamese Context

Once the market requirements on translators are identified, the translator competence model should be proposed. It is expected that the model will be validated by empirical research in translation. The participation of relevant stakeholders such as translation professionals, translation scholars, translation service users and providers, translator trainers is essential to generate reliable qualitative results. Also of particular notes is about the description of translator competence levels.

In the professional arena, there are different performance and specialization levels in the translation market (professional and non-professional translators of various kinds and at various levels). Likewise, the education of translators is generating a need for greater precision as regards the level of performance each translator can guarantee and the requirements to be met in each case. A detailed competence descriptor scale encompassing descriptive categories and level descriptors would facilitate comparison between different grading systems in academic and professional contexts and would serve as a guide for creating translation study programs, designing assessment procedures, producing textbooks and teaching materials, issuing official certificates, recognizing and validating academic qualifications,

establishing professional and academic profiles, and establishing professional quality control criteria (PACTE Group, 2018). In doing this, Vietnam should draw on proposed descriptions of translation competence and translation competence acquisition developed in the academic and professional arenas. Some of the most prominent ones include: PACTE Groups' experimental research projects on translation competence acquisition; the translation competence profile drawn up by EMT (European Master's in Translation); the description of professional translators' competences according to the UK's National Occupational Standards; the description of levels for translator certification produced by NAATI (Australia's National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters); the description of the ATA (American Translators Association) certification program.

It is noteworthy that developing a translator competence model, though being a crucial task, is only an initial step in professionalizing the translation industry of Vietnam. While there is still no consensus on what makes something become a profession until now, Millerson (1964, as cited in Hoang, 2020) successfully framed a list of some characteristics as follows from previous literature: (a) the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge; (b) education and training in these skills; (c) the competence of professionals measured by examinations; (d) a code of conduct to ensure professional integrity; (e) performance of a service that is for the public good; and (f) a professional association that organizes members. Among the six characteristics, what distinguishes occupation from profession is "the competence of professionals measured by examinations" (as cited in Hoang, 2020) and this competence is usually linked to legal instruments related to translation and translator certification. Therefore, the establishment of a professional association

for Vietnamese translators and interpreters which may be in charge of certifying procedures (assessing translator competence) is of utmost importance.

4. Conclusion

As this paper has demonstrated, scholars have attempted to specify the components of translator competence and have proposed various models from different perspectives (i.e., academic, pedagogical and professional), which suggests that the concept of translation competence is either expanding or not yet stable. Although these competence models might be considered "speculative" (Presas, 2000) to some extent, they do respond to the need to define didactic objectives in translator education and translation sector. By expounding upon the different definitions concerning translation competences, the focus is on how the local context determines the formation of a market-based competence model for Vietnamese translators. Specific steps to take and relevant factors to consider have also been put forward, with greater emphasis on conducting a market research on translation competence, proposing a translator competence model and introducing a translation competence level description. It is thus expected that this paper will contribute to the on-going discussion of professionalizing the translation industry in Vietnam although there is a long road ahead.

References

Angelelli, C. (2007). Longitudinal studies and the development of assessment for advanced competencies. In L. Ortega & H. Byrnes (Eds.), *The longitudinal study of L2 advanced capacities* (pp. 264–278). Routledge.

Beeby, A. (2000). Evaluating the development of translation competence. In C. Schäffner & B. Adab (Eds.), *Developing translation competence* (pp. 185-198). John Benjamins.

Bell, R. T. (1991). *Translation and translating: Theory and practice*. Longman.

Bernadini, S. (2004). The theory behind the practice: Translator training or translator education? In K. Malmkjer (Ed.), *Translation in undergraduate degree programmes* (pp. 17-29). Benjamins Translation Library.

Bowker, L., & Pearson, J. (2002). *Working with specialized language: A guide to using corpora*. Routledge.

Campbell, S. (1998). *Translation into the second language*. Longman.

Cao, D. (1996). Towards a model of translation proficiency. *Target*, *8*(2), 325-340. https://doi.org/10.1075/target.8.2.07cao

Chesterman, A. (1997). *Memes of translations*. John Benjamins.

Colina S. (2003). *Translation teaching: From research to the classroom: A handbook for teachers*. McGraw-Hill.

Do, T. T. Q. (2015). Towards translator competence in educating professional translators: The case of university translation program in Vietnam. In H. Haroon, H. C. Omar, G. S. Seong & N. Ardi (Eds.), *15th international conference proceedings on translation - synergising the translation community: Academia, industry and professional practice* (pp. 489-499). Malaysian Translators Association, Institute of Language and Literature, Malaysian Institute of Translation & Books Perbadanan Kota Buku.

Do, T. T. Q. (2016). Employability for graduate translation students: Towards possible translator training approach. In N. T. N. Nguyen & T. T. K. Nguyen (Eds.), *Proceedings of national conference in training translation and interpreting at university level* (pp. 319-331). VNUHCM Publishing House.

Do, T. T. Q. (2018). *A multi-perspective approach to translation practice and translation pedagogy: Professional translators, trainers and students – data from language services sectors and university translator training programs in Australia and Vietnam* [Doctoral dissertation, Monash University]. https://doi.org/10.26180/5c522cb6837e2

Do, T. T. Q. (2019). Pedagogical and professional perspectives on developing graduate's employability: The case of university translation programs in Vietnam. In R. Chowdhury (Ed.), *Transformation and*

empowerment through education: Reconstructing our relationship with education (pp. 95-115). Routledge.

Ehrensberger-Dow, M., & Massey G. (2008). Exploring translation competence by triangulating empirical data. *Norwich Papers: Studies in Translation*, *16*, 1–20. https://www.academia.edu/26640425/Exploring_translation_competence_by_triangulating_empirical_data

EMT Expert Group (2017). *The EMT translator trainer profile: Competences of the trainer in translation*. https://fr.scribd.com/document/246979198/Translator-Trainer-Profile-EMT

Eser, O. (2015). A model of translator's competence from an educational perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies*, *3*(1), 4-15. http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/IJCLTS/article/view/1279

García González, M., & Veiga Díaz, M. T. (2015). Guided inquiry and project-based learning in the field of specialised translation: A description of two learning experiences. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology, 23*(1), 107–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2014.948018

Gonzalez, J. & Wagenaar, R. G. (Eds). (2005). *Tuning educational structures in Europe: Final report - Phase one*. Universidad de Deusto.

Gouadec, D. (2007). *Translation as a profession*. John Benjamins.

Hansen, G. (1997). Success in translation. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, *5*(2), 201-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.1997.9961310

Harris, B. (1980). How a three-year-old translates. In E. A. Afrendas (Ed.), *Patterns of bilingualism* (pp. 370-393). National University of Singapore Press.

Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1997). *The translator as communicator*. Routledge.

Hoang, B. L. (2020). Translation profession status in Vietnam: Document and empirical analyses. *Transletters: International Journal of Translation and Interpreting,* (4), 99-123. https://www.uco.es/ucopress/ojs/index.php/tl/article/view/12613

House, J. (2018) *Translation: The basics*. Routledge.

Hurtado Albir, A. (2015). The acquisition of translation competence: Competences, tasks and assessment in translator training. *Meta*, *60*(2), 256-280. https://doi.org/10.7202/1032857ar

Hurtado Albir, A. (2017). Translation and translation competence. In A. Hurtado Albir (Ed.), *Researching translation competence by PACTE group*. John Benjamins.

Hurtado Albir, A. (Ed.). (2017). *Researching translation competence by PACTE group*. John Benjamins.

Hurtado Albir, A., & Alves F. (2009). Translation as a cognitive activity. In J. Munday (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to translation studies* (pp. 54-73). Routledge.

Kelly, D. (2005). *A handbook for translator trainers*. St. Jerome.

Kiraly, D. (1995). *Pathway to translation: Pedagogy and process*. Kent State University Press.

Kiraly, D. (2000). *A social construction approach to translator education*. St. Jerome.

Kiraly, D. (2006). Beyond social constructivism: Complexity theory and translator education. *Translation and Interpreting Studies, 1*(1), 68–86.

Lam, Q. D. (2007). Về tính chuyên nghiệp của dịch thuật. *Ngôn ngữ và đời sống*, *222*(10), 25-28.

Le, H. T. (2017). Về cơ sở lý luận đào tạo biên phiên dịch ở Việt Nam (On a theoretical foundation for professional translator and interpreter training and education for Vietnam). *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *33*(2), 105-117. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4145

Le, H. T. (2020). Xu hướng phát triển và những thách thức của giáo dục biên phiên dịch và những gợi ý cho đào tạo và nghiên cứu dịch thuật ở Việt Nam (Trends, directions and challenges in translator & interpreter education – Implications for education & research in Vietnam). In VNU University of Languages and International Studies, National Foreign Languages Project & National Taiwan Normal University (Eds.), *Kỷ yếu hội thảo quốc tế: Dịch thuật thời đại 4.0: Đào tạo, nghiên cứu và thực tiễn (International Conference Proceedings: Translation 4.0: Training, Research and Practice)* (pp. 24-36). Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.

Lesznyak, M. (2007). Conceptualizing translation competence. *Across Languages and Cultures*, *8*(2), 167-194. https://doi.org/10.1556/Acr.8.2007.2.2

Lowe, P. (1987). Revising the ACTFL/ETS scales for a new purpose: Rating skill in translating. In M. G. Rose (Ed.), *Translation excellence: Assessment, achievement, maintenance* (pp. 53-61). Sunny Binghamton Press.

Ministry of Finance. (2020, October 19). *Vietnam to become the fourth largest economy in Southeast Asia: IMF*. https://mof.gov.vn/webcenter/portal/tttpen/pages_r/l/detail?dDocName=MOFUCM183833

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. (2015, September). *Levels of accreditation*. http://www.naati.com.au/at-accreditation-levels

Neubert, A. (1994). Competence in translation: A complex skill, how to study and how to teach it. In M. Snell-Hornby, F. Pochhacker & K. Kaindl (Eds.), *Translation studies: An inter-discipline* (pp. 411-420). John Benjamins.

Neubert, A. (2000). Competence in language, in languages, and in translation. In C. Schäffner & B. Adab (Eds.), *Developing translation competence*. John Benjamins.

Nghiem, T. T. H. (2020). Tình hình đào tạo dịch ở Việt Nam thời đại 4.0: Thực trạng và khuyến nghị. In VNU University of Languages and International Studies, National Foreign Languages Project & National Taiwan Normal University (Eds.), *Kỷ yếu hội thảo quốc tế: Dịch thuật thời đại 4.0: Đào tạo, nghiên cứu và thực tiễn (International Conference Proceedings: Translation 4.0: Training, Research and Practice)* (pp. 258-272). Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.

Orlando, M. (2016). *Training 21st century translators and interpreters: At the crossroads of practice, research and pedagogy*. Frank & Timme.

Orozco, M. (2000). Building a measuring instrument for the acquisition of translation competence in trainee translators. In C. Schäffner & B. Adab (Eds.), *Developing translation competence* (pp. 1990-214). John Benjamins.

PACTE Group (2000). Acquiring translation competence: Hypotheses and methodological problems of a research project. In A. Beeby, D. Ensinger & M. Presas (Eds.), *Investigating translation* (pp. 99–106). John Benjamins.

PACTE Group (2003). Building a translation competence model. In F. Alves (Ed.), *Triangulating translation: Perspectives in process oriented research* (pp. 43-66). John Benjamins.

PACTE Group (2005). Investigating translation competence: Conceptual and methodological issues. *Meta*: *Translators' Journal*, *50*(2), 609-619. https://doi.org/10.7202/011004ar

PACTE Group (2018). Competence levels in translation: Working towards a European framework. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *12*(2), 111-131. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2018.1466093

PACTE Group (2020). Translation competence acquisition. Design and results of the PACTE group's experimental research. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *14*(2), 95-233. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2020.1732601

Piotroska, M. (2015). Revisiting translation competence in the 21st century. *Studies in Language: Constructing Translation Competence*, *39*, 13-26.

Presas, M. (2000). Bilingual competence and translation competence. In C. Schäffner & B. Adab (Eds.), *Developing translation competence* (pp. 19-31). John Benjamins.

Pym, A. (1992). Translation error analysis and the interface with language teaching. In C. Dollerup & A. Loddegaard (Eds.), *Teaching translation and interpreting: Training, talent and experience* (pp. 279-290). John Benjamins.

Pym, A. (2003). Redefining translation competence in an electronic age: In defence of a minimalist approach. *Meta*, *48*(4), 481-497.

Pym, A. (2005). Translator training and modern market demands. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, *13*(2), 132-142.

Pym, A. (2009). Training translators. In K. Malmkjaer & K. Windle (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of translation studies* (pp. 475-489). Oxford University Press.

Pym, A. (2013). Translation skill-sets in a machine-translation age. *Meta*, *58*(3), 487-503. https://doi.org/10.7202/1025047ar

Pym, A., & Torres-Simón, E. (2016). Designing a course in translation studies to respond to students' questions. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *10*(2), 183-203. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1198179

Quinci, C. (2015). Defining and developing translation competence for didactic purposes: Some insights from product-oriented research. In Y. Cui & W. Zhao (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching methods in language translation and interpretation* (pp. 179–198). Information Science Reference.

Risku, H., Angela, D., & Pircher, R. (2010). Knowledge in translation practice and translation studies: Intellectual capital in modern society. In D. Gile, G. Hansen & N. Pokorn (Eds.), *Why translation studies matters* (pp. 83-96). John Benjamins.

Sakwe, G. M. (2015). The standard profile of the 21st century translator and its impact on translator training. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, *3*(3), 86-104. http://www.eltsjournal.org/archive/value3%20issue3/9-3-3-15.pdf

Sawyer, B., D. (2004). *Fundamental aspects of interpreter education - Curriculum and assessment*. John Benjamins.

Schaffner, C., & Adab, B. (2000). *Developing translation competence*. John Benjamins.

Setton, R., & Andrew, D. (2016). *Conference interpreting: A trainer's guide*. John Benjamins.

Torres-Simón, E., & Pym, A. (2019). European masters in translation: A comparative study. In D. B. Sawyer, F. Austermühl & V. E. Raído (Eds.), *The evolving curriculum in interpreter and translator education (American Translators Association scholarly monograph series XIX)* (pp. 75-98). John Benjamins.

Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*. John Benjamins.

Way, C. (2008). Systematic assessment of translator competence: In search of Achilles' heel. In J. Kearns (Ed.), *Translator and interpreter training: Issues, methods and debates* (pp. 88–103). Continuum.

Wu, D., Zhang, L. J., & Wei, L. (2019). Developing translator competence: Understanding trainers' beliefs and training practice. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *13*(3), 233-254. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2019.1656406

XÂY DỰNG KHUNG NĂNG LỰC BIÊN PHIÊN DỊCH TRONG BỐI CẢNH VIỆT NAM: TỔNG QUAN NGHIÊN CỨU

Vương Thị Thanh Nhàn

Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,
Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Năng lực dịch thuật được coi là một nội dung cốt lõi của các chương trình đào tạo biên phiên dịch và trở thành một chủ đề được quan tâm của Nghiên cứu dịch thuật trong nhiều năm qua. Việc xây dựng khung năng lực dịch thuật phù hợp với bối cảnh trong nước là một trong những bước đi cần thiết nhằm hướng tới mục tiêu chuyên nghiệp hóa thị trường biên phiên dịch tại Việt Nam. Bài viết này phân tích các tư liệu và nghiên cứu trong và ngoài nước về năng lực dịch thuật, quá trình thụ đắc năng lực dịch thuật và các mô hình năng lực dịch thuật gắn với bối cảnh của Việt Nam. Qua đó, bài viết đưa ra một số khuyến nghị cho các nhà hoạch định chính sách, nhà giáo dục biên phiên dịch và các đối tượng cung cấp, sử dụng dịch vụ biên phiên dịch để cùng chung tay thực hiện mục tiêu đề ra.

Từ khóa: năng lực dịch thuật, thụ đắc năng lực dịch thuật, khung năng lực dịch thuật