

## Training Translators and Interpreters: The Need for a Competence-based Approach in Designing University Curricula

<sup>1</sup>Abouzar Oraki\*

<sup>2</sup>Gholam-Reza Tajvidi

IJEAP- 2001-1488

Received: 2020-02-22

Accepted: 2020-04-28

Published: 2020-05-08

### Abstract

Translation and interpreting in the modern world of the 21st century are markedly different from the traditional practice. In recent decades, universities and institutions worldwide have moved toward modifying their curricula accordingly. One significant popular step taken so far is the adoption of a Competence-based Approach to teaching translation and interpreting. The present study, as a narrow part of a PhD dissertation on translation and interpreting competence, is a qualitative research using documentary analysis to figure out the components of translation and interpreting competence. To this end, this study investigated the major translation and interpreting competence models (47 translation and 35 interpreting models as the corpus or material) as structured texts. The descriptive content analysis of the data indicated distinct competences as well as common core competences between translation and interpreting, inductively suggesting that universities and institutions develop different curricula for the respective programs so they can train individuals based on the standards of the market.

**Keywords:** Translation Competence, Interpreting Competence, Competence Models, Curriculum Design, Quality Translation/Interpreting

### 1. Introduction

Competent interpreters and translators cannot be left out of the picture in today's globalized world, in which, countries, organizations, markets and individuals are looking for new and efficient ways to better communicate with others and let their laws, ideas and goods spread in the best possible way. Nowadays, as far as training professional interpreters and translators is concerned, the responsibility is usually delegated by governments and organizations to special universities and institutions. The European Commission, as an instance, has entrusted the task of training translators and conference interpreters to universities such as ESIT - Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, Università di Bologna, KU Leuven Campus St-Andries, and KU Leuven Campus St-Andries and has demanded that the curriculum and pedagogical practices of those limited number of universities comply with the criteria laid out by the organization.

Training competent translators and interpreters has recently been juxtaposed with cultivating some certain competences in the individuals. As a move forward, university curricula have mostly, if not all, been tailored to specific competence domains specified by certain organizations or sections of the government. [Nikolov, Shoikova, and Kovatcheva. \(2014, p. 3-4\)](#) believe that competence-based training is regarded by many as "an answer to societal changes". They also maintain that this notion "can bridge the world of education, training, knowledge management, and informal learning". In a similar fashion, [Schäffner and Adab \(2000, p. X\)](#) refer to the consensus among scholars on "developing translation competence" as the "fundamental objective of any translation program". But what is the notion of competence and what are the competences and sub-competences to be developed in translators and interpreters?

<sup>1</sup> PhD student of Translation Studies (Corresponding Author), a.oraki@vru.ac.ir; Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature & Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Associate professor, tajvidi@atu.ac.ir; Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature & Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

The concept of ‘translation competence’, which is defined by the [PACTE Group \(2000, p. 100\)](#) as “the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be able to translate”, became a key term in the researches and academic writings of the 1990s, although some scholars (like [Pym, 2003](#)) would reckon the early stages to date back to the 1970s. [Hurtado-Albir \(2015, p. 258\)](#) similarly asserted that “Translation Competence (TC) began to be analyzed in Translation Studies in the mid-1980s, and became prominent in the 1990s”.

As time went by, this concept started to gain momentum with its sub-competences nowadays being regarded as the building blocks of translation curricula throughout the world. [Schäffner and Adab \(2000\)](#), for example, observed that translation competence has turned into a fundamental objective in any translation program. They also went on to say that this competence can be built and developed especially in academic situations. In a similar vein, and with regards to the purpose of their comprehensive study on translation competence, the PACTE Group (2017, p. xxv) explicitly pointed out that what they had in mind since 2000 was “to improve curricular design, and assessment in translator training institutions”. They also held that training translators must be based on Translation Competence and the acquisition thereof.

Regarding [Nida \(1964\)](#) being possibly the first scholar to use the Chomskyan term ‘competence’, [Rothe-Neves \(2007\)](#) contended that there is no consensus on the concept among Translation Studies scholars. [Pöschhacker \(2015, p. 69\)](#) also observed that a clear-cut definition of the term is never at hand. [Weinert \(2001, cited in Cheng, 2017\)](#) maintained that reaching a universal definition that can be applied to all contexts is almost a whim. For [Stoof, Martens, and Bastiaens \(2002, also cited in Cheng, 2017, p. 37\)](#), “the one and only true competence definition does not exist”. In a similar manner, [Esfandiari, Sepora, and Mahadi \(2015, p. 44\)](#) observed that although this is a key concept in quite a lot of disciplines and contexts, no attempt would bear fruit as to what competence is.

However, there are some clear-cut definitions of the concept in the related literature. For example, not unlike the most popular definition of the term by PACTE (2000), [Bell \(1991, p. 36\)](#) defined translation competence as a combination of “knowledge and skills” the translator, as a “communicator”, has to be possessed of. [Anthony Pym \(1992, cited in Kermis, 2008, p. 7\)](#) also defined translation competence as a translator’s “general knowledge”, which encompasses grammar, rhetoric, terminology, world knowledge, common sense and commercial strategies. Later in 2003, Pym proposed his new minimalist model which will be discussed under section 2.1.

It is worth remarking that many of the models developed for translation competence were meant to be used in interpreting situations. The importance of the present study, thus, lies in the attempt to discover the components of competence and find out whether interpreting should be regarded just like translation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Translation Competence Models

Although [Wolfram Wilss \(1976\)](#) is widely recognized as the true pioneer of using and defining the notion of translation competence, it is [Toury \(1974, cited in Bnini, 2016, p. 85 and Kiraly, 1995, p. 15\)](#) who had specified the following features for the concept in question prior to Wilss: 1) the ability to decompose texts according to text types, 2) the ability to identify a hierarchy of the relevancy of features of different types, 3) the ability to transfer fully and efficiently those relevant features, in order of their relevancy across linguistic and other semiotic borders, and 4) the ability to recompose the text around the transferred features.

[Wolfram Wilss \(1976\)](#) asserted that a translator has to be in possession of some competencies as the “*professional aptitude*”. As cited in [Kelly \(2005, p. 28\)](#), Wilss brought forth three kinds of competences: a) a *receptive competence* in the source language (the ability to decode and understand the source text), b) a *productive competence* in the target language (the ability to use the linguistic and textual resources of the target language) and c) a *supercompetence*, basically defined as an ability to transfer messages between linguistic and textual systems of the source culture and

linguistic and textual systems of the target culture. [Delisle \(1980\)](#), cited in Kermis 2008, p. 5) presented a list of four “essential competences” for professional translators: *linguistic competence*, *encyclopaedic competence*, *comprehension competence*, and *re-expression competence*. *Linguistic competence*, as Delisle believes, refers to a translator’s language proficiency in the source and target languages. *Encyclopaedic competence* is what Kermis (2008) assumes to be replaced by ‘*instrumental competence*’, so that it can encompass the Internet and electronic translation tools in the modern time. *Comprehension competence* refers to “the translator’s ability to correctly interpret the original meaning of a certain text”. “The term ‘*re-expression*’ signifies the correct transfer of a text’s original qualities”.

[Roberts \(1984\)](#), cited in Kelly, 2005, pp. 28-29) identified five distinct competences a translator should possess: 1) *linguistic competence* (ability to understand the source language and quality of expression in the target language), 2) *translational competence* (ability to grasp the articulation of meaning in the text and to transfer it without deforming it into the target language, avoiding interference), 3) *methodological competence* (ability to document themselves on a given subject and to assimilate the corresponding terminology), 4) *disciplinary competence* (ability to translate texts in certain basic disciplines such as economics, computing, law), and 5) *technical competence* (ability to use different translation aids, such as word processing, terminology data bases, Dictaphones, etc.) [Nord \(1988/1991\)](#), cited in Kermis, 2008) outlined seven competences a translator should have: *text reception*, *text analysis*, *research*, *transfer*, *text production*, *translation quality assessment*, and *linguistic and cultural competence* in the source and target languages. Nord classified Delisle’s (1980) comprehension competence into two separate levels: “*text reception*” and “*text analysis*”. She also classified Delisle’s re-expression competence into three different types of competence, namely, *transfer*, *text production* and *translation quality assessment competence*.

Defining translation competence as a combination of “knowledge and skills” the translator, as a “communicator”, has to be possessed of, Bell (1991, p. 36) specifies five distinct areas of knowledge, namely, target language knowledge, text-type knowledge, source language knowledge, subject area (‘real world’) knowledge, and contrastive knowledge. He also stresses that “decoding skills of reading” as well as “encoding skills of writing” must be added to this repertoire of knowledge. Though not directly referring to translation competence, [Gile \(1995\)](#), cited in Kelly, 2005, p. 29) views translation competence as “components of translation expertise” comprising: *passive command of passive working languages*, *active command of active working languages*, *sufficient knowledge of subject matter of texts and speeches* (or what he elsewhere termed “world knowledge”) and *knowing how to translate*.

[Neubert \(2000\)](#), who believes that translation competence is “approximate”, meaning that there is no such a thing as full competency, identified seven features of translation competence: complexity, heterogeneity, approximation, open-endedness, creativity, situationality and historicity. As he observes, translation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon. However, Neubert holds that “language competence is a *sine qua non* of translation and it is more than a commonplace to point out the extreme value of mother tongue knowledge and skill, often grossly underestimated”. Having mentioned the above, he distinguished between five competences, namely, language competence, textual competence, subject area competence, cultural competence, and transfer competence.

[Schäffner \(2000\)](#), cited in Schäffner and Adab, 2000, pp. 143-147) identified six specific competences required for translating at an undergraduate level: 1) *linguistic competence* of the languages concerned, 2) *cultural competence* (general knowledge about historical, political, economic, cultural, etc. aspects in the respective countries), 3) *textual competence* (knowledge of regularities and conventions of texts, genres, text-types), 4) *domain/subject specific competence* (knowledge of the relevant subject, the area of expertise), 5) *(re)search competence* (a general strategy competence whose aim is the ability to resolve problems specific to the cross-cultural transfer of texts), and 6) *transfer competence*, (ability to produce target texts that satisfy the demands of the translation task).

Classifying translation competence theories into four categories as 1) competence as no such thing, 2) competence as a summation of linguistic competences, 3) competence as multi-componential, and 4) competence as just one thing, Pym (2003) proposed his own “minimalist approach” to defining translation competence which includes the sum of two abilities:

- “The ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT1, TT2... TTn) for a pertinent source text (ST)”, and
- “The ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence”. (p. 489)

Kelly (2005), who believes that translation curricula must be designed according to the standards of translation competence, outlined seven competences a professional translator requires: 1) communicative and textual competence, 2) cultural and intercultural competence, 3) subject area competence, 4) professional and instrumental competence, 5) attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence, 6) interpersonal competence, and 7) strategic competence.

[Göpferich \(2009\)](#) identified three competences to have a key role in the translation process, namely, communicative competence in the source language and the target language, domain competence, and tools and research competence. She also maintained that “there is general agreement that translation competence involves more than the sum total of these three – and perhaps other – sub-competences” (pp. 13-14).

In her unpublished thesis at Masaryk University, [Šeböková \(2010\)](#) presented her TC model which is comprised of the following components: 1) *Core Translation competence*, which competence occupies the centre in this model. It takes in two dimensions: practice and theory. What this competence is responsible for, as Šeböková says, is the integration and activation of all the other sub-competencies; 2) *Linguistic competence*, which includes a thorough understanding of the language pair in question, including the knowledge of textual and discursive aspects; 3) *World/Subject competence*, which includes general and specific knowledge in a certain domain; 4) *Research competence*, which includes the translators ability to look for the best solution to potential translation problems using different types of research tools; 5) *Tools competence*, which includes the translators ability to use technology in order to facilitate the translation task. It encompasses both general tools like word processors and translation aid tools like translation memories and corpora, and 6) *Cultural competence*, which as the name implies, is concerned with the knowledge of the source and target cultures.

The American Translators Association ([ATA \(2012, p. 29\)](#)), describing translation competence in terms of *knowledge*, *skills* and *abilities* (KSAs), tried to comply with ISO 17024 definition of translation competence as the “**ability** to apply **knowledge** and **skills** to achieve intended results”. Through focus groups and surveys, the ATA also identified 36 KSAs the most important of which are as follows:

Table 1: Ksas Identified by The ATA (2012, P. 29)

Knowledge Areas	Skill Areas	Ability Areas
Vocabulary	Textual analysis	Read source language; write in target language
Grammar	Terminological research	Understand nuances and registers
Idiomatic usage (combinations of words)	General writing	Perform language transfer
General knowledge	Editing and proofreading	Verify correspondence (congruity judgment)
Subject-matter-specific knowledge	Computer (word processing and Internet)	Common sense
Ethical obligations	Organizational	Follow specifications
	Personal time management	Think analytically and intuitively

The Australian National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters ([NAATI \(2015\)](#)) which defined its objective as “improving the integrity and efficiency of NAATI certification system” and in a similar fashion to the ATA recognized ISO 17024 definition of competence as the “ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results”, differentiated between **competence** (“measurable specific and objective milestones describing what people have to *accomplish* to consistently achieve or exceed the goals for their role” [[Koby and Melby, 2013, p. 177](#)]) and **competency** (the knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) successful people have. Attributes are “inherent personal characteristics required to integrate the knowledge and skills in order to be an effective translator”). They opted for the latter in their quest of the KSAs.

Having compared the 120 knowledge and skill areas from the Public Sector Training Package (TP) with those proposed by the ATA (2012) and [EMT's \(2009\)](#) competencies, NAATI identified the following eight common categories: 1) Language competency, (2) Intercultural competency, 3) Research competency, 4) Technological competency, 5) Thematic competency, 6) Transfer competency, 7) Service Provision competency, and 8) Ethical competency.

Table 2: NAATI Translator KSAs (2015, p. 7)

Competency	Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	
	Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge		
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skills Create and maintain a knowledge bank	
Technological Competency	Translation technology knowledge	Computer skills: text production and management Computer skills: Internet Computer skills: Computer-Assisted Translation	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel Reliable Willing to learn Objective
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge		Accepting-of-criticism Respectful Collaborative Self-reflective Problem-solving
Transfer Competency	Translation methods knowledge	Textual analysis skills Meaning transfer skills Writing skills	
	Translation standards knowledge Textual conventions knowledge	Follow specifications Revision, proofreading, and post-editing skills	
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of translation	Translation business skills Translation business systems skills Communication skills Interpersonal skills	
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Professional ethics	

Since the introduction of their model (1998/2000), the PACTE Group have carried out several experiments and observations regarding TC which brought about considerable modifications in the

model. For example, in the final version of the model, 1) transfer competence would not stand alone as the most important translation competence component, 2) communicative competence was rendered into bilingual competence, 3) strategic competence was considered as occupying the central role in the process of translating, 4) knowledge about translation was identified as so important to be regarded as a competence in itself, and 5) Psycho-physiological competence changed into Psycho-physiological *components*. The revised model therefore included five competences and a series of Psycho-physiological components in the following manner: Bilingual sub-competence, Knowledge of Translation sub-competence, Instrumental sub-competence, Strategic sub-competence, and Psycho-physiological components.

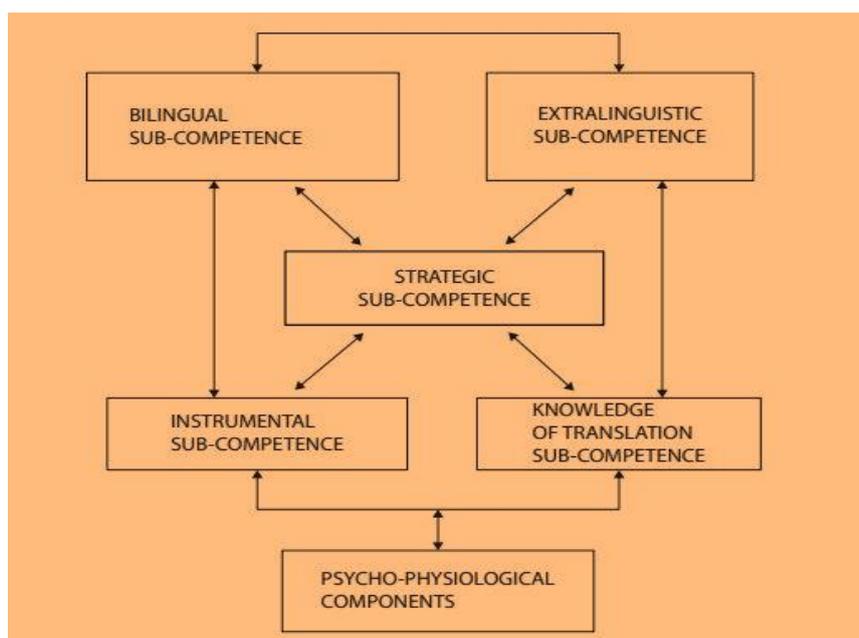


Figure 1. Translation Competence model (PACTE 2003, extracted from PACTE, 2017, p. 40)

Based on the hypotheses formulated in their study (2003), the PACTE Group (2017) also proved the following characteristic features of TC: 1) TC is the underlying system of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to translate; 2) TC is expert knowledge; 3) TC is made up of declarative and procedural knowledge, but it is basically procedural; 4) TC is made up of a set of sub-competences and psycho-physiological components that are activated in every act of translation; there are relationships and hierarchies among them that are subject to variation; 5) The TC sub-competences are: Bilingual, Extralinguistic, Knowledge of Translation, Instrumental and Strategic; 6) The sub-competences that are specific to TC are: Knowledge of Translation, Instrumental and Strategic, and 7) Strategic sub-competence occupies a central role in the relationships and hierarchies.

As for the acquisition of translation competence (ATC), the PACTE Group (2017, p. 305) also postulated that: 1) ATC is, like all learning processes, a dynamic, non-linear, spiral process; 2) ATC involves an evolution from novice knowledge (pre-TC) to TC; 3) ATC is a process in which the development of procedural knowledge – and, consequently, of the Strategic sub-competence – is essential; 4) ATC is a process in which the sub-competences of TC are developed and restructured; 5) In ATC, the development of the Strategic, Instrumental, and Knowledge of Translation sub-competences is particularly important; 6) In ATC, not all sub-competences develop in parallel, i.e. at the same time and at the same rate; 7) ATC is dependent upon directionality (direct/inverse translation), and 8) ATC is dependent upon the learning environment.

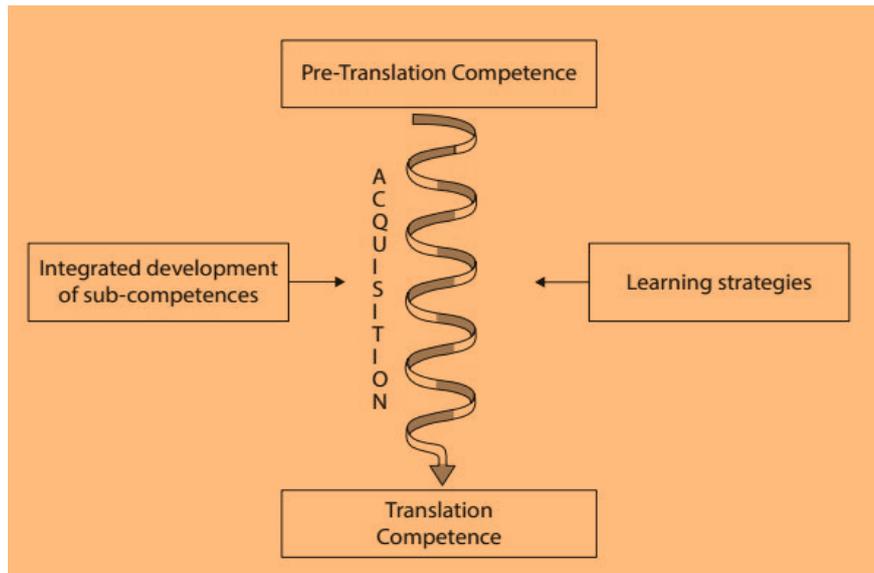


Figure 2. Translation Competence Acquisition Model (PACTE, 2017)

In their new model, which draws on their earlier model in 2009, the EMT Expert Group (2017) highlighted five major areas of competence:

*Language and Culture Competence* (including general or language-specific linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills, etc.)

*Translation Competence*: Considering this competence to be “at the heart of translation service provision competences”, they attribute transfer between languages as well as strategic, methodological, and thematic competences to this section.

*Technology Competence* (including awareness of the translation-related technologies and the ability to use them according to the task and demands of the client, etc.)

*Personal and Interpersonal Competence* (including skills and abilities like managing the time, stress, budget, etc., ability to meet the requirements of teamwork, ability to use social media, self-evaluation, etc.)

*Service Provision Competence*: (including the ability to meet market demands, the ability to negotiate with the potential client, the ability to comply with the defined codes and standards, etc.).

[House \(2018, p. 24\)](#), contending that translation competence encompasses three elements including a) source language receptive competence, b) ability to transfer the message from the source language to the target language, and c) mastery of target linguistic resources, emphasized that it is transfer skills that identify translators from bilinguals.

### 2.1. Interpreting Competence Models

Compared to translation competence, interpreting competence has been under-researched so far (see [Kaczmarek, 2010](#)). One of the main reasons is that like many ordinary people, some scholars do not believe in the separation of the two and hold that the job interpreters and translators handle is not very different. Gile (1995) for example, maintains that it is interpreters that separate themselves from translators; what translators and interpreters do has a lot in common although there are differences too. Therefore, most of the translation competence definitions and models presented above were in fact meant to be used both in translation and interpreting situations. However, this section has embarked on presenting the most salient studies regarding interpreting competence in a chronological manner.

Without directly referring to the concept of competence, [Sanz \(1930, cited in Pöchhacker, 2016, p. 164\)](#) presented the following list of qualities a parliamentary interpreter requires in a

professional situation: (1) *cognitive abilities* (e.g. intelligence, intuition, memory) and (2) *moral and affective qualities* (e.g. tact, discretion, alertness, poise).

In her *Aptitude Testing for Simultaneous Interpretation at the University of Ottawa*, Sylvie Lambert (1991) identified the following most important characteristics that all incoming candidates must be possessed of: *command of A and B languages, the ability to transfer meaning, general knowledge, pronunciation and enunciation, personality traits, and specific interpretation-related skills* (including memory skills and the ability to listen and speak simultaneously).

Gile (1995/2009, p. 3), holding the idea that the differences between translation and interpreting have been blown out of proportion by interpreters, relates the differences between translation and interpreting merely to the “cognitive stress” interpreters go through in the time-constrained process. In his *Effort Model*, Gile (pp. 158-159) also believes that:

- Interpreting requires some sort of “mental energy” that is only available in limited supply.
- Interpreting takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates.

Pointing to the relationship between the interpreter’s overload and their performance breakdowns, which as he asserted was first discussed by Pinter (1969), Gile (p. 160) referred to the components of interpreting or as he calls “Efforts”: *a listening and analysis component, a speech production component, and a short-term memory component*. It merits mentioning that the term ‘efforts’, as Gile emphasizes, refers to the “effortful nature” of the components, meaning that “they include deliberate action which requires decisions and resources”.

Kalina (2000, p. 5) defines interpreting competence as the ability to “process texts” using special strategies in a communication situation where two or more languages are involved. As she emphasized, these strategies are different from those used in monolingual situations. The interpreter here acts as an interlingual mediator. This process is considerably constrained by time, “lack of semantic autonomy” and “the potential interference between closely connected processes of production and comprehension”. Kalina also maintains that this competence is not merely a linguistic phenomenon; rather, it makes use of psycholinguistic and cognitive psychology as well. The significant role played by memory is also highlighted by the author. Confirming that there are some competences or what she calls “basic competences” which translators and interpreters have in common, Kalina also refers to the differences among them. The basic competences in her view are: *linguistic competence, cultural competence, world and relevant special knowledge, Text processing and production competence, stylistic competence* or “the ability to make swift decisions and to access one’s knowledge and relate textual information to previous knowledge”, and *competence to tackle interlingual problems*.

Hale (2007) outlined the following knowledge and competencies required for Community Interpreting: 1) Knowledge of professional issues including a clear knowledge of the role and ethical requirements of community interpreters, 2) Advanced language competence encompassing advanced bilingual grammatical, semantic and pragmatic competence (awareness of the different registers of the source and target languages, knowledge of general and specialized terminology, acceptable pronunciation, etc.), 3) Excellent listening and comprehension skills, 4) Excellent memory skills, 5) Adequate public speaking skills, 6) Adequate note-taking skills, 7) Advanced interpreting skills (short and long consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting and sight translation), 8) Good management skills including the ability and know-how of assessment as well as the ability to coordinate and control the interpreted situation, 9) A knowledge of the context and subject matter, 10) An understanding of the goals of the institutions where the interpreting is taking place, as well as of their discursive practices, 11) Cross-cultural awareness, and 12) A knowledge of the theories that underpin the practice including a knowledge of linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, translation theory.

Corsellis (2008) identified the following skills required by a public service interpreter: knowledge of the relevant public service, its structure, procedures, processes and personnel; written

and spoken fluency in both the relevant languages, including the commonly used range of relevant registers and terminology; the ability to transfer meaning accurately between languages, both ways, including two-way consecutive interpreting, whispered simultaneous interpreting (including the ability to go in both directions), sight translation, and translation of short written texts; understanding of the code of ethics and of strategies to implement it; and strategies for professional and personal continuous development.

Pöchhacker (2015, pp. 17-18) identified the following as the most important knowledge and skills an interpreter has to be possessed of: excellent knowledge of working languages, general world knowledge and a wide range of interests, comprehension and analytical skills, memory, verbal fluency and expressive ability, language transfer and communication skills, stress resistance and stamina, good voice quality and confident delivery, and team spirit. He also added *psychomotor skills* and *interpersonal interaction* skills to the list in particular modes of interpreting; they are respectively required for signed language interpreting and dialogue interpreting.

What NAATI (2016) did regarding the definition and categorization of interpreting competence was almost the same as their earlier work in 2015 concerning translation competence. They identified the following eight common categories for interpreting competence or as they put it “competency”: language competency, intercultural competency, research competency, technological competency, thematic competency, transfer competency, service provision competency, and ethical competency. The competency areas specified by NAATI for interpreters are the same as those they earlier presented for translators, but as the following table illustrates, there are some differences in the knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) required.

Table 3: NAATI Interpreter KSAs (2016, p. 8)

Competency	Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skill Create and maintain a knowledge bank	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel
Technological Competency	Interpreting technology knowledge	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICT) skill	Reliable Willing to learn Objective Respectful
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge Institution-specific knowledge		Collaborative Self-reflective Problem-solving confident
Transfer Competency	Interpreting knowledge modes	Discourse analysis skills Discourse management skill Meaning transfer Memory skills Rhetorical skill	

		Interpreting standards knowledge	Self-assessment skill
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of interpreting	Interpreting business skill	Communication skill
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Interpersonal skill	Professional ethics

[Meng \(2017, pp. 115-116\)](#) regarded linguistic competence (vocabulary, grammar, culture, professional knowledge, etc.) as the most important competence among others, believing that this competence has a key role in expressing the ideas or the “output of information”. He also identified the following interpreting competences: bilingual ability, the ability of clear and accurate expression in target language, excellent memory and note-taking skills, quick response and emergency-dealing abilities, and encyclopedic knowledge. Regarding Consecutive Interpreting competence and drawing on Gile (1995), [Gillies \(2019, pp. 146\)](#) attributes skills to two main phases; the first phase takes in *listening and analysis, note-taking, short-term memory operations, and coordination* (effort management); the second phase involves *recalling, note-reading, and production*.

Having said all of the above, it still remains to be answered in what competence domains one should be proficient enough to carry out a successful communication (translation and interpreting) and whether translation competence and interpreting competence should be regarded as referring to the same phenomenon and requiring the same qualifications.

### 3. Methodology

As the present study aimed at analyzing the already present theories and information regarding the abstract concept of translation and interpreting competence, with no experiments carried out and no participants attending, it is therefore a qualitative study which has taken a conceptual framework, trying to clarify the definition of translation and interpreting competence concepts and the components (as independent variables) thereof, relying on a categorical or nominal data measurement scale, as the basis of Competence-based approaches to training competent translators and interpreters. All of the models in question were analyzed for their components to figure out whether they added to the previous models or not. To this end, the models were broken down into their constituent parts and their similarities to and differences with the previous models were recorded. The similarities and differences between translation competence and interpreting competence (models) were also explored in the current study so as to be taken into consideration when translation and interpreting curricula are to be designed by different organizations, universities and institutions.

#### 3.2. Instruments

As the nature of conceptual researches entails, a documentary analysis method is usually applied in such studies. Therefore, the current study embarked on collecting and analyzing the different documents that were related to translation and interpreting competence models (47 translation models and 35 interpreting models) in one way or another. The instruments used in this research are thus merely structured texts or publications such as the prominent articles, papers, journals, translation and interpreting organizations’ booklets, theses, and dissertations published from 1930 (the time the first interpreting competence model was introduced) to the present time with regards to translation and interpreting competence definition and their respective models.

### 4. Results

The data collected regarding the components of the models of translation and interpreting competence mentioned above showed that there are some key or core competences in almost all models, that is to say, some components were included in many of the models either under the same

titles or given a new label. Time seems to have been a decisive issue in how the different models were developed. For example, most, if not all, of the models of translation competence preceding the 2000s mainly focused on the individual's source language competence, target language competence, and transfer (strategic) competence. The core competences of the translation competence models of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, have encompassed subject-specific knowledge (thematic competence), cultural knowledge, ethical knowledge, research skills, personal qualities, technological abilities, pragmatic knowledge, translation quality assessment ability, professional (vocational) knowledge, strategic competence, and social competence in addition to the competences presented in the earlier models.

As for interpreting competence models, general world knowledge, cognitive abilities (including short and long memory skills), linguistic knowledge, and transfer competence were the major constituent parts of the individual's competence in older models. However, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and based on the needs of the market, the newer models came to add public speaking abilities, team spirit, personal qualities such as the individual's voice quality and stamina, cross-cultural competence, and professional and ethical knowledge to the previous lists of competences. In a similar fashion to translation competence models, many of the interpreting competence models analyzed in this study shared some components either keeping the previous titles or bearing new ones.

Having listed translation and interpreting competence components separately, a comparison was made to figure out what competence domains translators and interpreters share and what distinct components they have. The following tables represent the common competence domains in translation and interpreting models.

Table 4: Common Translation and Interpreting Competences

Common Translation and Interpreting Competences
Linguistic Competence
Intercultural Competence
Thematic Competence
General World Knowledge
Pragmatic Competence
Strategic Competence
Professional/Ethical Competence
Monitoring Competence

Table 5: Specific Translation and Interpreting Competences

Specific Interpreting Competences	Specific Translation Competences
Interpreting Competence (oral transfer abilities)	Technological and Research Competence
Stress Management Competence	Stylistic Competence
Memory Skills	
Verbal Competence	
Coordination Competence	
Multi-accentual Competence	
Personality Traits and Physical Abilities	

## 5. Discussion

As mentioned earlier, training translators and interpreters in today's world revolves around the concept of competence and competence-based approaches. But what has so far been referred to as competence is rather a vague notion. Therefore, the present study was an endeavor to find out what is meant by competence and what components it has in Translation and Interpreting Studies. Among all the definitions of the concept in translation and interpreting literature, the PACTE Group's (2000, p. 100) definition as "the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be

able to translate” with their sub-competences seemed to be more comprehensive than other definitions.

The findings of the study showed the following sub-competences as the core components of translation competence: technological and research competence, and stylistic competence. As for the components underlying interpreting competence, multi-accentual competence, stress management competence, memory skills, verbal competence, and personality traits and physical qualities were the most specific ones. There were, however, some basic components that were common to translation and interpreting including linguistic competence, intercultural competence, thematic competence, general world knowledge, pragmatic competence, strategic competence, monitoring competence, and professional/ethical competence.

It goes without saying that the tasks translators and interpreters carry out are of communication type. In order to establish effective communication, the translator or the interpreter must have an adequate level of linguistic knowledge. However, this is not the only requirement of successful communication. Based on the data collected, one needs to know the nuances of the cultures they are communicating information to. The population with whom the translator is communicating with is of paramount importance requiring high level of pragmatic knowledge. However, although the two tasks have a lot in common, they take place in quite different settings requiring some special competences. Concerning the models analyzed under this study, what was notable is that the older models of competence (preceding the 2000s) would pay less attention to the needs of today’s market, while the newer models heavily concentrated on the requirements of the market.

What was also worthy of note regarding translation and interpreting competence is that some scholars only carried out a process of name-changing, if not coping from others, when introducing their own model of competence. For example, linguistic competence as the most fundamental and indispensable component of all models was given names such as ‘language competence’, ‘interlingual competence’, ‘bilingual competence’ and ‘multilingual competence’; ‘cultural competence’, as the knowledge of the source and target cultures, also came to be recognized as ‘bicultural competence’ or ‘intercultural competence’; ‘translational competence’ was in the same fashion referred to by others as ‘transfer competence’ and ‘re-expression competence’; ‘technological competence’, ‘technical competence’, ‘technology competence’, ‘instrumental competence’, ‘encyclopaedic competence’ and ‘research competence’ would all refer to one’s knowledge of the tools required for the profession; ‘professional competence’, ‘ethical competence, as well as ‘service provision competence’ were all used to mean almost the same thing; ‘subject-area competence’ is also referred to as ‘domain-competence’, ‘subject-specific competence’ and ‘subject-area knowledge’; some would refer to personal qualities as ‘attitudinal competence’ while others would rather use ‘disposition’ or ‘psycho-physiological competence/components’; ‘monitoring competence’ would in a similar manner come to mean ‘quality assessment competence’.

The term ‘multi-accentual competence’ was not mentioned in any of the models analyzed, although some of the models had referred to this competence domain under other categories. However, the present study, as its contribution to the studies on the concept of interpreting competence, opted to regard it as a separate competence under the present name to emphasize the importance of understanding and working on the different accents of a certain language in interpreting classes as well as authentic situations.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

Many universities around the world have moved toward a competence-based approach to translator and interpreter training. They have significantly modified their curricula toward the requirements of the market. The competences they take into account when designing their curricula are of paramount importance. No matter how competence is defined or under what name it is referred to, it is a combination of the building blocks of knowledge and skills necessary as a foundation upon which translator and interpreter training programs must be based. Universities in Iran usually

embark on linguistic matters and pay the least attention to cultural competence, technological competence, and professional/ethical competence with regards to training professional translators.

As for training professional interpreters, which is usually offered at a postgraduate level in many countries around the world especially in the European Union, Iranian universities not only do not offer any Interpreting program at a postgraduate level, but also, surprisingly, they treat interpreters just like translators and therefore there is usually no attention paid to memory skills and how to improve the individual's working memory or the individual's public speaking (or verbal) competence and stress management. Another problem coming up as a consequence of viewing translators and interpreters alike is that the interpreter trainer cannot teach all modes of interpreting because, as an instance, Simultaneous Interpreting, as the most favored mode of interpreting in conference situations, entails state-of-the-art technology as well as a certain period of traineeship, which is usually given the cold shoulder in Iranian universities offering Interpreting programs. However, the findings of the study proved that despite similarities between translation and interpreting as two types of communication, there are distinct requirements too. Therefore, as the results indicated, Iranian universities have to regard the two tasks as separate phenomena and offer interpreting programs at higher educational levels, only when candidates have reached a proficient level of linguistic, pragmatic, cultural, as well as general world knowledge. The point has to be made, however, that most, if not all, of the models developed so far and analyzed in this study, especially those concerning interpreting competence, were non-experimental studies. The present study recommends, as its concluding words, that future researchers embark on conducting experimental studies to develop new models of interpreting competence.

## References

- [ATA. \(2012\). Overview of services. Retrieved from http://www.govtilr.org/Publications/ATA2012.pdf.](http://www.govtilr.org/Publications/ATA2012.pdf)
- [Bell, R. T. \(1991\). \*Translation and translating: Theory and practice\*. New York: Longman London.](#)
- [Bnini, C. \(2016\). \*Didactics of translation: Text in context\*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.](#)
- [Cheng, S. \(2017\). \*Translation competence development among learners: A problem-solving perspective\* \(Doctoral dissertation\). University of Manchester, Manchester, England.](#)
- [Corsellis, A. \(2008\). \*Public service interpreting: The first steps\*. England: Palgrave Macmillan.](#)
- [Delisle, J. \(1980\). \*L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction: Initiation à la traduction française de textes pragmatiques anglais, théorie et pratique\*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, Part I trans. by P. Logan and M. Creery \(1988\) as: \*An interpretive approach\*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.](#)
- [EMT Expert Group. \(2009\). \*Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication\*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key\\_documents/emt\\_competences\\_translators\\_en.pdf.](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf)
- [EMT Expert Group \(2017\). EMT competence framework. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt\\_competence\\_fwk\\_2017\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competence_fwk_2017_en_web.pdf)
- [Esfandiari, M. R., Sepora, T., & Mahadi, T. \(2015\). Translation competence: Aging towards modern views. \*Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences\*, 192 44–53.](#)
- [Gile, D. \(1995\). \*Basic concepts and models for interpreter and translator training\*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.](#)
- [Gillies, A. \(2019\). \*Consecutive interpreting: A short course\*. New York: Routledge.](#)

- [Göpferich, S. \(2009\). Towards a model of translation competence and its acquisition: the longitudinal study TransComp. In S. Göpferich, A. Lykke Jakobsen & I. M. Mees \(Eds.\), \*Behind the mind: Methods, models and results in translation process research\* \(pp. 12–38\). Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur.](#)
- [Hale, S.B. \(2007\). \*Community interpreting\*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.](#)
- [House, J. \(2018\). \*Translation: The basics\*. New York: Routledge.](#)
- [Hurtado Albir, A. \(2015\). The acquisition of translation competence: Competences, tasks, and assessment in translator training. \*Meta\* 60 \(2\) 256-280.](#)
- Hurtado Albir, A. (2017). *Researching translation competence by PACTE Group*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- [Kaczmarek, L. \(2010\). \*Modelling competence in community interpreting: Expectancies, impressions and implications for accreditation\* \(Doctoral dissertation\). University of Manchester, Manchester, England.](#)
- [Kalina, S. \(2000\). Interpreting competence as a basis and a goal for teaching. \*The Interpreters' Newsletter\* 10, 3-32.](#)
- [Kelly, D. \(2005\). \*A handbook for translator trainers\*. Manchester: St. Jerome.](#)
- [Kermis, M. \(2008\). \*Translators and interpreters: Comparing competences\* \(Master's thesis\). Universiteit Utrecht, Amsterdam, Netherlands.](#)
- [Kiraly, D. C. \(1995\). \*Pathways to translation: Pedagogy and process\*. England: Kent State University Press.](#)
- [Koby, G. S., & Melby, A. K. \(2013\). Certification and job task analysis \(JTA\): Establishing validity of translator certification examinations. \*The International Journal for Translation & Interpreting Research\*, 5\(1\), 174 -210.](#)
- [Lambert, S. \(1991\). Aptitude testing for simultaneous interpretation at the University of Ottawa. \*Meta\*, 36 \(4\), 586–594.](#)
- [Meng, Q. \(2017\). Promoting interpreter competence through input enhancement of prefabricated lexical chunks. \*Journal of Language Teaching and Research\*, 8\(1\), 115-121.](#)
- [NAATI. \(2015\). \*NAATI translator certification: Knowledge, skills and attributes\*. Retrieved from: \[https://www.naati.com.au/media/1059/translator\\\_ksa\\\_paper.pdf\]\(https://www.naati.com.au/media/1059/translator\_ksa\_paper.pdf\).](#)
- [NAATI \(2016\). \*NAATI interpreter certification: Knowledge, skills and attributes\*. Retrieved from \[https://www.naati.com.au/media/1262/interpreter-ksa-paper-final\\\_290216\\\_2.pdf\]\(https://www.naati.com.au/media/1262/interpreter-ksa-paper-final\_290216\_2.pdf\).](#)
- [Neubert, A. \(2000\). Competence in language, in languages, and in translation. In C. Schäffner, & B. Adab \(Eds.\), \*Developing translation competence\* \(pp. 3-18\). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.](#)
- [Nida, E. \(1964\). \*Toward a science of translating\*. Leiden: Brill.](#)
- [Nikolov, R., Shoikova, E., & Kovatcheva, E. \(2014\). \*Competence-based framework for curriculum development\*. Sofia: Za bukвите, O'pismeneh.](#)
- [Nord, C. \(1991\). \*Text analysis in translation: Theory, methodology, and didactic application model for translation-oriented text analysis\*. Amsterdam: Ga, Rodopi.](#)
- [PACTE \(2000\). Acquiring translation competence: Hypotheses and methodological problems in a research project. In A. Beeby, D. Ensinger & M. Presas \(Eds.\), \*Investigating translation\* \(pp. 99-106\). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.](#)
- [Pinter, I. \(1969\). \*Der einfluss der übung und konzentration auf simultanes sprechen und hören\* \(Unpublished doctoral dissertation\). University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria.](#)

- [Pöchhacker, F. \(2015\). \*Routledge encyclopedia of interpreting studies\*. New York: Routledge.](#)
- [Pöchhacker, F. \(2016\). \*Introducing interpreting studies\*. New York: Routledge.](#)
- Pym, A. (2003). Redefining translation competence in an electronic age. defense of a minimalist approach, *Meta*, 48(4), 481-497.
- [Roberts, R. \(1984\). Compétence du nouveau diplômé en traduction. In \*Traduction et qualité de langue. Actes du colloque société des traducteurs du québec/conseil de la langue française\* \(pp. 172-184\). Québec: Éditeur officiel du Québec.](#)
- [Rothe-Neves, R. \(2007\). Notes on the concept of translator's competence. \*Quaderns. Rev. trad.\* 14, 125-138.](#)
- [Sanz, J. \(1930\) Le travail et les aptitudes des interprètes parlementaires. \*Anal. d'Orientació Professional\* 14, 303-318.](#)
- [Schäffner, C. & Adab, B. \(2000\). \*Developing translation competence\*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.](#)
- [Šeböková, S. \(2010\). \*Comparing translation competence\* \(Unpublished master's thesis\). Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.](#)
- [Stoof, A., Martens, R. L., Van Merriënboer, J. J. & Bastiaens, T. J. \(2002\). The boundary approach of competence: A constructivist aid for understanding and using the concept of competence. \*Human Resource Development Review\*, 1\(3\), 345-365.](#)
- [Weinert, F. E. \(2001\). Concept of competence: A conceptual clarification. In D. S. Rychen, & L. H. Salganik, \(Eds.\), \*Defining and selecting key competencies\* \(pp. 45-65\). Ashland, Ohio: Hogrefe & Huber.](#)
- [Wilss, W. \(1976\). Perspectives and limitations of a didactic framework for the teaching of translation. In R. Brislin \(Eds.\), \*Translation applications and research\* \(pp. 117-137\). New York: Gardner.](#)