

# **A Suggested Model for Enhancing EFL Prospective Teachers' Translation Performance**

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### **Introduction**

A professor of translation (Enling, in Zhao, 2004: 105) once commented on the teaching of translation: “The very role of translation teaching is to help the students travel fewer or shorter detours before they get onto the right track”. Probably no one would disagree with this goal of teaching. What then would be the most effective way of achieving this goal? The simplest answer may be to teach students the features of translation expertise that are missing in the students' translation processes and products.

This paper reports on the findings of a PH.D study that investigated Egyptian EFL student teachers' translation processes and products. By means of employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the participants' translation problems (namely; reading comprehension problems, researching problems, transferring problems, writing problems, and intercultural problems), as well as the strategies used by those students to overcome these problems (i.e. planning and decoding strategies, researching strategies, transferring strategies, intercultural strategies, writing strategies, and revising and editing strategies) were determined. In light of results reached, and based on relevant previous studies and translation instruction models, the study suggested a model of teaching translation.

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This paper in turn presents the suggested model for enhancing EFL students' performance in translation. In justifying this purpose, the present paper outlines the results reached by the reported study that gave significance to the suggested model.

### **Scope of the Literature and Previous Studies Reviewed:**

The previous related studies reviewed in the reported study have covered two main areas. The first was an extensive overview for translation studies conducted in the Egyptian context, especially these tackle EFL student teachers. The second area, on the other hand, represented a more detailed review for translation process studies. It is observed that process-oriented studies were mostly interested in identifying and defining translation problems and consequently strategies to solve those problems. They were also interested in the contrasts between different categories of participants, e.g. professional translators and students (both foreign language students and translator students) or even bilinguals without formal training of any kind in language learning. The later studies differ from the first, very general studies as the researchers often chose to investigate more narrowly defined aspects of the translation process. Generally, they also narrowed the definition of what constitutes translation in order to exclude the parameter of the purely innate predisposition in bilinguals to mediate sense so that translation is seen and defined as "a meaningful and potentially professional activity" (Schmidt, 2005: 33).

### **Aspects Investigated:**

The present study investigates EFL student teachers' translation process (especially the strategies employed by

them during performing the translation task) and products (the writing errors and problems they may encounter when translating). The product-based studies were covered with in translation studies conducted in the Egyptian context; whether in analyzing translation text errors (Attia, 1975), or evaluating students' performance on translation examinations as well as evaluating teaching and learning translation methods and materials (El-Sheikh, 1990; Al-Banna, 1993; El Zeini, 1994; Gabr, 2002), or even testing the effectiveness of given interventional techniques (Ayad, 1982; El-Shafie, 1992; Kamel, 1990; Massoud, 1995; Al-Maghraby, 1995; Abdel Rahman, 1996; El-Sakran, 2002; Dadour, 2004).

The process-based studies in translation, on the other hand, are relatively scarce in the Egyptian research community (Aly, 2004; Solhy, 2007). Therefore, a variety of FL/L2 studies have been reviewed. The vast majority of these studies investigated the cognitive aspect of translation, i.e. the problems and difficulties encountered by participants during they are translating, and the strategies they employed to overcome these difficulties (Krings, 1986; Gerloff, 1988; Kiraly, 1990; Barbosa & Neiva, 2003; Whyatt, 2005; Badawi, 2008; Rini, 2009; Eftekhary & Aminizadeh, 2012; Zhou & Jiang, 2012). Unlike these studies, Künzli's (2009) investigated the linguistic aspect of translation, while Rambek's (2011) study was methodologically oriented in that it compared the types of information provided from two methods of data collecting: concurrent TAPs and retrospection TAPs. Additionally, some other studies compared and contrasted writing and translation processes with purpose of improving language or translation

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instruction (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1996; Cohen, 2000; Pavlovic, 2007; Lifang, 2008; Bagheri & Fazel, 2011).

### **Participants Investigated**

The participants of present study are EFL student teachers' studying translation in the faculties of education. They study translation not for professional purposes but rather for reproducing the message of the SL, while paying attention to different linguistic structures involved in the FL. The researcher therefore has only reviewed translation studies in the Egyptian context that researched EFL student teachers. However, due to the fact that there is paucity in translation process studies in the Egyptian research community in favor of investigating translation products, there was a need to broaden the scope of previous related studies in order for translation process studies to be reviewed.

A plenty of studies reviewed thus have been carried out with participants with different levels of language proficiency as well as translation competency. Some of them were language learners and prospective teachers (Krings, 1986; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1994, 1996; Aly, 2004; Badawi, 2008; Lifang, 2008; Bagheri & Fazel, 2011). Others utilized translation students (Kiraly, 1990; Rini, 2009; Rambek, 2011; Eftekhary & Aminizadeh, 2012; Zhou & Jiang, 2012), or graduates translators of different levels of readiness, i.e. beginner, intermediate, and professional (Gerloff, 1988; Whyatt, 2005; Cohen, 2000). On the other hand, some studies have involved groups of advanced language learners or other bilinguals along with professional translators or translator students, they served as a comparison framework, a design feature that can be seen

in the studies by Kiraly (1990); Barbosa and Neiva (2003); and Künzli (2009).

The worth observing is that the literature review has broaden the scope of participants investigated in order to research all is about translation process, especially those aspects which may not be present in studies conducted in Egypt. Thus, the object of some studies reviewed was translation as a professional activity, which is a rather different task than translating in a pedagogical context and for language purposes. Nevertheless, the studies provided a number of research questions and categories to apply to analysis as well as results that show a highly fruitful way to use TAP in the study of the translation process.

**Data sources used:**

While there has been a wealth of research on translation teaching methodology and development of teaching materials as well as errors analysis and translation evaluation in the Egyptian research community, study on translation process investigating what is happening during the translation process, e.g. the problems and difficulties faced by students while translating and the strategies used by them during translating from English into Arabic and vice versa to overcome these problems, can scarcely be found (e.g. Aly; 2004; Solhy, 2007). As a result, the product orientation has been the predominant trend in many of the translation studies in Egypt, with the emphasis devoted to analyzing the errors of and evaluating the translated text by means of translation tests (Attia, 1975; El-Sheikh, 1990; Al-Banna, 1993; El Zeini, 1994; Dadour, 2004), and occasionally via questionnaires and guided interviews (e.g. Solhy, 2007).

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Studies investigating translation process, however, tend to employ more qualitative methods such as Think Aloud Protocols (TAPs) retrospective interviews, empirical observations of the subject's nonverbal behavior registered on videotape or in detailed field notes taken by the researcher, together with the quantitative methods like questionnaires, translation tests, and content analysis of translated texts and verbal reports. In this respect, TAPs are the prominent methods of data collection in the majority of translation process studies (Krings, 1986; Gerloff, 1988; Kiraly, 1990; Whyatt, 2005; Badawi, 2008; Künzli's, 2009; Rini, 2009; Rambek, 2011; Eftekhary & Aminizadeh, 2012; Zhou & Jiang, 2012). TAP studies of translation offer an excellent example of the interdisciplinary nature of translation research.

### **The study :**

#### **Participants of the Study:**

The student population of the reported study is university female and male majors of English in the faculties of Education in Egypt. These students attend 30 Faculties Education (at Ministry of higher education, Al-Azhar, and Private Institutions). On average, they join these Faculties when they are 18 years old and finish their 4-year study when they are 22 years old. A sample of 100 students in two Faculties of Education (at Al-Azhar University, Cairo; and Damanhur University) took part in the present study for the quantitative data collection purposes, from which 17 students took part for the qualitative data collection purposes.

#### **Instruments of the study**



The study depended on data triangulation by using questionnaires, translation tasks, think-aloud tasks, and semi-structured retrospective interviews with students, as well as error analysis of translation texts. This data triangulation provided the researcher more reliable quantitative and qualitative data from different sources.

**Procedures of data collection:**

Four instruments were administered to the participants of the study in April and May 2014. With the help of some staff members at the two Faculties, the researcher met the student population, explained to them the purpose of the study, and invited them to participate. The students were informed that taking part in the study was voluntary, and the purpose and procedures of the research were clarified to them. They were also told that their confidentiality would be protected both in the research report and in its related publications. All the collective sessions of the students were conducted at the Faculties, as well as the individual ones. At the end of the data collection stage, the participants were provided with sufficient contact information so that they could reach the researcher in case they had any questions regarding the study. The procedures were as follows:

Firstly, the *Translation Problems & Strategies Questionnaire* was administered to 100 participants in two collective sessions (50 participants in each session). Before giving the participants the questionnaire, they were told that there were no wrong answers; so that they should try to be as honest as possible when responding to the questions. The questionnaire was given to the students in Arabic in order not to misunderstand the meaning of any items. The students were not allowed to work in groups when

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completing the instrument and they were allowed to take as long as they wanted to complete the questionnaire but all of them finished completing it in less than 30 minutes.

Secondly, out of the total sample (100 students), seventeen students were randomly assigned for the TAPs & interview sessions. The reason for assigning this seemingly large number of participants to the TAPs & interview sessions was to get as much as possible information concerning the students' cognitive processes that cannot be included or made clear in the questionnaire.

Thirdly, another introductory collective session (about 65 minutes) was held with the seventeen students who agreed to complete the TAP session, in which they were informed of the procedure and how they perform TAPs.

Fourthly, seventeen individual sessions were conducted with the participants over a period of 30 days between 22<sup>nd</sup> of April and 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2014. Every individual session took at least 95 minutes for completing the translation TAP task and the retrospective interview. The participants of the TAP sessions consented to having their interview video-recorded.

Fifthly, before each individual session, the assigned student was reminded with the purpose of the procedure, as well as how to perform the TAP method. After that the students started to translate the required tasks, while he was told to feel free to ask the researcher about anything. During that the researcher was setting observing and taking notes.

Sixthly, after completing the translation tasks, each student was interviewed and the interview session was video-recorded.

Finally, the assigned student for each individual session completed the post-translation questionnaire.

**Results of the study:**

Results indicated that the major stated reading comprehension problems were: identifying the meaning of new words, reading for gist and main ideas, extracting and summarizing the essential information in a text or in other words, the ability to summarize, while the main researching problems were: searching for appropriate information to gain a better grasp of the thematic aspects of a text, using related encyclopedias and glossary lists for specialized terms, and using monolingual dictionaries to check the usage of the new words in the source language and in the target language.

Moreover, the major transferring problems were identifying beginnings and endings of ideas in the text and the relationships between these ideas, identifying the “best” meaning that fit into the context, and identifying the structure in the target language that “best” represents the original, while the main writing problems were transmitting the ideas of the text in clear ideas in the target language (TL), making changes to the text as a whole to give it a sense of the original without distorting the original ideas, and refining the target text in light of understanding the source text. Furthermore, error analysis of students’ translation texts revealed that they committed 291 errors. The greatest percentage of errors were grammatical and substance errors (26% for each), followed by syntactic errors (18%), then semantic and organization errors (10% for each), and finally lexical errors (9%).

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Translation strategies used by students to overcome problems they encountered, on the other hand, were divided into six categories: where the main planning and decoding strategies were reading and studying the whole translation text before making attempts to translate it, and understanding the overall meaning without referring to the dictionary. While the researching strategies frequently used were using the internet for researching purposes, looking up the dictionary for each and every new word wither by using bilingual dictionaries for looking up meanings of new words, or by using monolingual dictionaries to check the usage of the new words in the source language and in the target language.

Furthermore, results revealed that the most employed transferring strategies were sticking to the word order and organization used in the source text, reproducing the 'message' of the original but distort nuances of meaning, attempting to produce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures, taking the word directly or with little modification in its structure from another language, and changing the organization somewhat to fit the target language, while the most employed intercultural strategies were: converting the SL grammatical constructions to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are translated singly, out of context, comparing ST and TT, naturalizing the bizarre expressions or exoticizing the natural ones, altering the level of explicitness, and adding or omitting information, and converting the SL culture to the TL culture and rewrite the text. Then, the most employed writing strategies were translating sentence for sentence, purposely

making use of complex grammatical structures, and translating word for word. Finally, the most employed revising and editing strategies were making changes to the text as a whole to give it a sense of the original without distorting the original ideas, rephrasing certain sentences to qualify for the overall meaning translated, leaving the monitoring for qualitative or stylistic errors in the text to the revision stage, and correcting surface errors immediately.

In addition, qualitative data concerning think aloud protocols (TAP) sessions were analyzed in terms of translation unit length, problem units versus non-problem units, in addition to analyzing translation processes at both macro- and micro-levels after coding cognitive moves has been completed. The main macro-level and micro-level translation processes were: linguistic translation processes (bilingual dictionary search, resolving lexical problems, analyzing lexical and grammatical elements of the ST, and putting words together into a larger linguistic unit), followed by transferring & intercultural processes (reducing meaning, attempting syntactic reconstruction, and re-contextualizing), then conceptual & semantic processes (checking against ST meaning and evaluating the ST, rephrasing ST segment, employing mnemonic aid, and making connections to the context and abstracting main ideas), and finally rhetorical processes (breaking off attempts, understanding the function of ST elements, and monitoring for TL Accuracy, making intuitive acceptability judgment, and accept interim solution by means of self-evaluating the TT).

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In light of these results, a suggested model for enhancing the teaching of translation at faculties of education was developed.

### **The Suggested model:**

As has been evident in the literature review, the process of translation teaching, on the contrary to the product orientation, should coincide with the process of translating itself. By definition, the process approach to translation teaching is learner-centered and needs-based. It incorporates problem solving methodologies involving a collaborative approach on the part of teachers and students and includes procedures for learning that take into account the actual social situation of the classroom in which the learning occurs.

In the translation class, the process approach to translation teaching is more appropriate instead of the traditional translation methods that involve teaching translation through search-and-replace operations and depend on performing translation tasks at home and merely reviewing at the class. It is an approach that stresses the need for teaching translation to proceed in the same paths that translators do in natural life when accomplishing a translation task. Translation instruction, therefore, ought to facilitate the acquisition of a set of translation competences through translation tasks (authentic assignments with specification of the purpose, audience and other contextual/pragmatic factors).

In light of the review of literature, as well as the results extracted from the participants of the reported study, the researcher views that teaching translation should proceed in

the same paths that translators do in natural life when accomplishing a translation task.

Teaching translation should begin by teaching reading comprehension through the various teaching techniques in order for acquiring students the ability to read and comprehend the ST. (e.g. read for gist and main ideas, read for details, and identify cultural references in the choice of words in the text). Moving forward with the process of translating, students are met with various difficulties for which they need to be taught how to use the basic researching tips (such as using bilingual monolingual, using related encyclopedias and glossary lists for specialized terms, and using the internet for researching purposes).

After determining the meanings of new vocabulary and getting a quite profound understanding of the ST, the teacher can step in and begin teaching problem solving techniques and analytical thinking practice. This can be achieved through a variety of methods and techniques (e.g. syntactic strategies; shift word order, change clause /sentence structure, add or change cohesion - semantic strategies; use super ordinates, alter the level of abstraction, redistribute the information over, pragmatic strategies; naturalizing, altering the level of explicitness, add or omit).

Finally, the teacher should be aware of writing techniques and styles, and writing teaching methodology to consolidate the final outcome of the process of translating, as students have become ready to begin the actual process of rewriting by producing the message again in the TL. Students in this final stage are advised to follow these strategies when writing the final version of the translation

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(for instance: using correct word order and sentence structures as followed in the TL, and making changes to the text as a whole to give it a sense of the original without distorting the original ideas).

### **The Basis of the Model:**

This suggested model is an extension of other models reviewed (Bachman 1990; Cao, 1996; PACTE, 2003; Littlemore & Low, 2006; EMT, 2009; Künzli, 2009) in that it attempts to characterize the processes by which the various components interact with each other and with the context in which language use occurs.

The present model of translation competence focuses on theoretical definitions of TC, as well as procedural aspects of translation as emerged out of analysing data of the field study. Translation competence in this model is made up of a system of sub-competencies that are inter-related, and that their relationships are subject to variations; based on the nature of translation task (directionality, language combination, subject matter) and on the nature of the translator (specialization or experience)



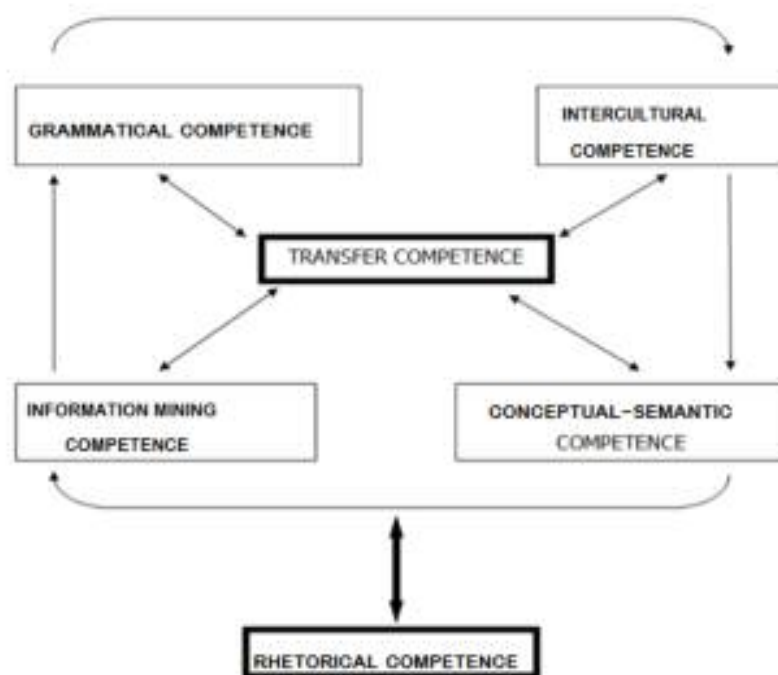


Figure (4-9) Graphical presentation of the suggested model (prepared by the researcher)

As figure (4-9) points out, the model comprises six competences that are considered equally important, yet they are not entirely distinct categories as they are treated as interdependent or even overlapping, which means that there is no hierarchical order introduced into the model. All the competences are defined by means of lists of components.

1. **Grammatical Competence:** It refers to a learner's language knowledge of, and ability to use the grammatical system of the target language. It includes knowledge of vocabulary, morphology and syntax, and governs the choice of words to express specific significations, their forms and their arrangement in

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utterances to express propositions. In translation, it refers to the mastery of the language code of the SL and the TL.

2. **Information Mining Competence:** includes a number of well-established components in the literature, which are: knowing how to identify one's information and documentation requirements; developing strategies for documentary and terminological research (including how to perform Monolingual and Bilingual Dictionary Search dictionary search, what strategy to employ in the case of unsuccessful dictionary search, and how to resort to learned translation techniques) ; knowing how to extract and process relevant information for a given task (documentary, terminological, phrase-logical information); knowing how to use tools and search engines effectively (e.g. terminology software, electronic corpora, electronic dictionaries); and mastering the archiving of one's own documents.
3. **Intercultural Competence:** It is a two-dimensional construct (where the sociolinguistic and textual dimensions are in the comparison of and contrast between discursive practices in L1 and L2). It comprises knowing: how to recognize function and meaning in language variations (social, geographical, historical, and stylistic); how to identify the rules for interaction relating to a specific community, including non-verbal elements (useful knowledge for negotiation); how to produce a register appropriate to a given situation, for a particular written or oral document; how to recognize and identify elements, values and references proper to the cultures represented;

and how to bring together and compare cultural elements and methods of composition.

4. **Conceptual-Semantic competence:** It refers to the ability to work on the text as semantic representation. The translator is grasping the non-language-specific meanings or representations of the linguistic forms before re-forming them into another set of linguistic forms. It comprises knowing: how to abstract main ideas; make connections to the context; paraphrase ST ideas into TL words; employ mnemonic aid; and detect text coherence cues to map out the logical structure of the ST.
5. **Transfer Competence:** a central competence, which integrates all the others. It refers to ability to transfer the source text to the standardized system as well as the cultural context of the target language, taking into account translation's function and the characteristics of the receptor. It includes five sub-competences: reducing meaning; making extra-linguistic judgment; recontextualizing, referring to translation expectation structure; and attempting syntactic reconstruction.
6. **Rhetorical competence:** It refers to the ability to understand and produce well-organized and cohesive text; i.e. how to compose a document in accordance with the conventions of the genre and rhetorical standards. It includes five sub-competences: understanding the function of ST elements; monitor for TL Accuracy; providing explanations to parts of the ST to assist TL readers; making intuitive acceptability judgment; and self-evaluating the TT.

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