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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L1	Native Language
L2	Foreign Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ST	Source Text
TAPs	Think-Aloud Protocols
TC	Translation Competence
TILT	Translation In Language Teaching
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target Text

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# Introduction

The work presented in this investigation aims at exploring the level of competence achieved in English to Italian translation by second- and third-year students of the bachelor degree *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* at the University of Padua.

The increasing interest in translation as a tool for language learning is the result of the new trends and approaches in Translation Studies. Its long absence from L2 education was the result of the decline of the Grammar and Translation Method and the rise of the Communicative Approach. The latter method emphasized the use of oral language and condemned translation as a passive transposition of artificial sentences aimed uniquely at teaching appropriate grammar.

The establishment of the TS as a fully-fledged discipline, the development of the cognitive psychology and the functional theories contributed to the acknowledgment of translation as a dynamic and communicative act whose efficacy as language learning tools is now largely supported by scholars. Although, in the early phase TS had focused on literary and technical texts, in the last few decades, other types and genres have been introduced in foreign language teaching education. This is the case of tourist and promotional texts which are now considered to be one of the most suitable materials to develop and improve students' translation ability. Their graded difficulty and the accessibility to the content, as well as familiarity with the subject area make them perfect for beginners and intermediate language students.

After a review of the history of translation competence and the models of acquisition and developments proposed within academia, in the second chapter the work focuses on the didactic curriculum of the undergraduate course at the University of Padua, with particular reference to the English courses. Moreover, my investigation presents the strong points of the curriculum, and it analyses the reasons why text types enable the development of TC. In the third chapter, the research methodology and the model used for the investigation, as well as the collection and the results of the data will be discussed. The final chapter provides an overall picture of the quality of students' performance throughout their EN>IT translation courses.



# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 Defining Translation

Translation has been variously defined, but the problem remains that there are no clear boundaries of what can be identified as a translation or not. Moreover, the importance of a deep understanding of its meaning is essential for both translation in language teaching and language learners. Hence, the dichotomous nature of translation, as a process and as a product, should not be kept distinct as it has been traditionally:

Learning how to translate is not a special purpose or an add-on to general learning, but should be an integral part of a major aim of language learning - to operate bilingually as well as monolingually. (Cook 2010: 55)

It is impossible to be aware of how a language works without both a solid theoretical background and a practical exercise on translation. Therefore, as translation studies are a significant part of the learning process, it is important to determine the nature of translation.

The term ‘translation’ derives from the Latin *transfere* which means ‘to carry across’ and which is also at the origin of the English word ‘transfer’. However, since the concept of transfer implies inevitable losses deriving from the differences between languages, some scholars preferred to use the term equivalence. For instance, Catford refers to translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Cook 2010: 55). Nevertheless, the conceptual problem about the nature of translation was not solved by this change in terminology. The constant quest for an understanding of equivalence is at the heart of modern translation theory and consequently of the shift in language learning teaching.

In the popular view, the semantic level was of prime importance as the target text was supposed to be equivalent in meaning to the source text. The idea of a perfect correspondence between languages was confuted soon: it is impossible to translate something in one language keeping the exact meaning of the original one. The semantic

level has to be linked to other levels in order to carry all the meanings conveyed. According to Catford (1978), translation consisted of a series of choices on what was relevant or not in translating. However, this situational approach did not explain how such choices could be made.

Since the 1970s the focus has shifted from formal and linguistic proficiency to pragmatic and communicative mastery. This change was due to a holistic approach to the text as a manifestation of the “world” and to the interdisciplinary contributions to Translation Studies. According to pragmatic theory, the literal semantic level is only one of the various component of translation. The focus is rather on the situation, the social conventions and on the sender and receiver’s background knowledge. Hence, a literal translation does not imply an equivalence between form and function in the two languages: the function of a sentence could need to be interpreted in relation to the culture. However, nowadays, translation focuses on extended texts rather than on short examples. Therefore, the current focal point is on discourse level and on the cultural and social values underlying the text. The identification of the genre of the source text and its appropriate translation is important since any translation is considered as the representation of a particular type of communication expressed with specific lexicon and respecting particular conventions. The aim of translation is to convey the overall effect of the original text. However, the attempt to render equivalence in both texts at all levels raises other issues since the meaning often results from the interaction of semantic, linguistic and pragmatic levels. Given the impossibility to render the whole equivalence, translators need to sacrifice some aspects in favour of others. The emphasis on the product rather than on the process led to the reduction of the visibility of translation and of translators.

In recent years, the issue of the visibility has emerged with reference to postcolonial literature. Venuti (1998) introduces the concept of ethnocentric violence as result of domesticating translation, that is a translation in which the foreign text assimilates the values of the target text. According to his view, a covert translation corresponds to an act of violence since all the cultural differences are cancelled and the consolidation of hierarchy is due to the worldwide assimilation of the target text’s view. Moreover, there is another voice which is possible in translation: the translator’s point of view. The issue of the translator’s visibility is particularly clear in ideological and political matters.

Recently, the concept of translation has shifted to an “institution-building practice” (Cook 2010: 57). This has also been reflected in a change of terminology within the discipline – from Translation Theory to Translation Studies. The rise of globalization, migration and mobility and the consequent encounter between institutions and lay citizen has led to a huge request of translation and interpretation services. On the one hand, translators are required to voice the institutional values and consequently the language they reproduce should function as part of the discourse of the institutions. On the other hand, in these contexts translators operate as cultural mediators with the result of a text being accentuating or attenuating the message of the source text. Translation has always been part of power inequality such as between minority and majority group. Therefore, this arises the issue on the position and ethical responsibility of the translators. In the last decades, numerous research analyzed the role of translation in the globalized world. As suggested by House (2015), most texts translated from English tend to use Anglo-Saxon norms with the pretension to universality. Moreover, the technological advances and the rapidity of the communication have also stimulated an interest in non-verbal communication and visual music as creators of meaning.

The massive presence of translation in any interactional context has had consequences for both society and academia. Translators are no longer placed in an undefined and unknown position between the two languages but rather they play an important role in mediating cultural and linguistic values. However, this positive consideration of the role of translation was only possible through the long journey Translation Studies has undertaken. Moreover, the different and conflictual idea of the nature of translation has affected the manner in which it was used or avoided in language teaching education.

## **1.2 Historical Overview**

The increasing interest in translation as a tool for language learning is the result of new trends and approaches in Translation Studies. The establishment of TS as a fully-fledged discipline, the development of cognitive psychology and functional theories contributed to the acknowledgment of translation as a dynamic and communicative act. Although

translation has never been fully abandoned in the language classroom, the belief of its inefficiency, unreliability and irrelevance has affected research and studies in this field. By taking a brief look at the history of translation it is clear that the numerous, often contrasting approaches which have characterized the past centuries are the causes of the lack of homogeneity of goals, methods and approaches in translation teaching.

The long absence of translation in language classes has to be related to the history of language learning theories and methods which outlawed translation in foreign language didactics. However, before the development of these approaches, the dominant method of teaching foreign languages in European school from the 1840s to the 1940s included the use of translation as a means through which grammar and language was learned. Although it was first used to teach Greek and Latin in grammar school its use was then extended to the modern languages teaching. This method, called Grammar-Translation, was based on the conviction that grammar could be taught systematically through sample sentences in L2 graded for difficulty and accompanied by translation in L1. Lexis and grammar were learned through exercises that involved the translation of constructed sentences exemplifying the rules currently in focus. So, the only prerequisites needed to translate were the knowledge of grammar rules and the use of a good dictionary. “Knowing the meaning of a word was thus conceived as knowing its translation equivalent” (Cook 2010: 10). Therefore, since the comparison and the contrast between L1 and L2 was claimed to be the best manner of learning a new language, translation was believed to be the best practice to interpret and understand the sentences and the vocabulary of the foreign language. Although broadly criticized, this method persisted long into 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reasons for its long popularity are rooted in being a safe route for both teachers and students. In fact, since the class was structured by following the lessons of the book, teachers were not required to possess a whole linguistic proficiency and as students’ progress was evaluated by their comprehension of rigid grammar rules, they were not required to put much effort in teaching. Since lessons reserved no surprise, the predictability of the lessons was a safe option for students as well. However, the excessive use of translation led to the progressive decline of the Grammar-Translation method and the consequently rejection of the prominent position of translation in teaching foreign languages.

The Reform Movement, formed by a group of linguists and phoneticians from different parts of Europe, based its idea on the primacy of oral communication, the

importance of an accurate pronunciation and the theory of “associationism”, which assumed that memorization was more likely to work in connected texts than in isolated, unnatural sentences (Cook 2010: 5). The shift in language teaching was radical: emphasis on speech, on connected and natural texts and use of foreign language in class. Although the beliefs upon which they based their theories has been surpassed by new discoveries in linguistic studies, at that time this movement was a legitimate response to the excesses in grammatical accuracy and indifference to oral skills in secondary school education. Their position about translation was not univocal. In general, as Sweet suggest, it was included in the teaching practice for both beginners and advanced learners because it was acknowledged as an useful and immediate resource to get to the meaning of foreign words and phrases (Sweet 1964: 201).

At the same time in America the increasing number of people learning English and the revolution of its role as lingua franca used in commercial activities made it necessary to design new courses for a new target of people such as immigrants to USA, tourists, traders. The didactic approach had to be modified according to the new needs of the learners: acquiring language skills rapidly and for functional reasons. This new type of teaching brought to the establishment of private language schools. Among them, there was the Berlitz School where the so-called Berlitz Method was developed. It was the first time translation was clearly banned from language teaching. The reasons for this absence are due to the interference it can create with L1 and to its impossibility of rendering the peculiarities of each language. Therefore, the didactic focus was on oral language which was taught by native-speaking teachers and the recourse to grammatical explanations was minimal. In Europe the requirement of mother-tongue teachers and the absence of L1 in class was believed not to be suitable to secondary school education (Laviosa 2014: 12). Although these two methods are opposed to each other, they contributed to the birth of new practices which impacted the manner language was taught.

The numerous approaches developed in these years were influenced by the importance the Direct Method gave to the oral communication. Although Methods such as the Oral Method, the Situational Language teaching and the Army Method focused their attention on the priority of speaking skills, they did not excluded translation from their practice. Some of them were influenced by a study on the state of the modern language teaching conducted in 1923. The Coleman Report claimed that reading skills were the means by which student should acquire the knowledge of the grammar structures and the meaning

of foreign words. Although the use of L1 was not allowed, translation was not banned from teaching practices as it could allow a better comprehension of some passages of the texts.

The greatest damage done to the use of translation in language teaching was probably inflicted by the Grammar-Translation method itself (Zojer 2009: 32). On the one hand, it isolated language from the involved subjects and their intentions, language was conceived to be formed by ordered units with no consideration for its social links; its approach to translation often created an illusion of the existence of a perfect equivalence between L1 and L2. On the other hand, the use of artificial sentences which did not reflect real-life utterances and the lack of focus on listening and speaking skills, the absence of a direct contact with the foreign language except from translation practice brought to the conception of translation as the evil of language acquisition process. Consequently the following methods centered their attention on the development of target language skills without resorting to the native speakers' language. Translation was outlawed from the theory and therefore it was eliminated from the teaching practice. It was thought to:

- undermine the principle of monolingualism used in the classroom;
- be an isolated skill which is not of any use in teaching the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills;
  - to damage the development of the oral skills because of the excessive focus on translation;
  - to facilitate mistakes in students because it provokes interference between the mother tongue and the new language learned (Zojer 2009: 34).

Similarly to the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method conceived language as an act of communication, therefore the attention was centered on the acquisition of oral proficiency. This new approach was influenced by the Structural Approach and the behaviorist learning theory. According to Skinner's theory, habit formation was constructed via response and reinforcement of a given behavior. So, students learn to speak a new language as a native speaker does through the exposition of certain verbal stimuli which modify and develop their previous verbal behavior. Consequently, language learning was perceived as a mechanical habit formation in which errors and L1 had to be avoided. So, the exclusion of translation would facilitated the learning process and would eliminate the negative transfer from L1 to L2. Translation was admitted only at advanced

level as a means of clarifying and facilitating comprehension. Around the 1970s numerous minor approaches – Community Language teaching, Suggestopaedia, Total Physical Response – banned translation from their practice.

Nevertheless, translation was banned from numerous language learning methods in secondary schools and in specialist language school, translation has never been abandoned from teaching practice. In fact, as reported in a study conducted by Grotjahn and Klevinghaus in 1975, some teachers who adhere to the Direct Method used translation exercises to a high degree. Moreover, they proved that in some instances, direct methods even encouraged the use of translation as a language teaching tool (Zojer 2009: 32-3).

Translation has continued to be used in many contexts, especially at university level with the consequence of a division in language teaching practice. Although it persisted and still persists with various degree of legitimacy, there has been no recognition of its position in literature. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards the teaching of L2 without reference to L1 was a common unjustified assumption by almost any language teaching theory. As Cook (2010: 21) pointed out “it is not that it was considered, assessed, and rejected, with reasons given for that rejection, but rather that it was simply ignored”.

### **1.2.1 The Long Silence of Translation**

Broadly speaking, twentieth century language teaching theory have undergone two revolutions:

- a) the shift from cross-lingual to intra-lingual teaching
- b) the shift from form-focused to meaning-focused approach.(Cook 2010: 21)

The first revolution corresponds to the abandon of Grammar-Translation Method in favor of the Direct Method. The main change was the disappearance of the L1 from the classroom and the exclusive use of L2 in teaching practice. However, this shift did not

correspond to a different manner of conceiving language learning. The structure of the class did not change: language was still assumed to be formed by grammar rules exemplified in constructed and graded utterances. Although there was a modification in methods, approaches and techniques, it is possible to track a common focus: language was learned through a deductive process in which the rules were first presented and then practiced by students. In these teaching methods the ban of translation makes the learning process more difficult. It is particularly true when facing equivalence problems with realia or complex grammar rules. However, some movements derived from Direct Method did not condemn translation so severely, attitudes towards translation varied from total ban to a last resort for incompetents. In broad terms, translation was banned from the classroom while the Contrastive Analysis for language learning, which indirectly entailed the use of translation, was only confined to academic research.

The new theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and the theory of communicative competence led to a change of paradigm. The focus was no longer on the form but rather on meaning and communication. The approaches which developed around the 1970s, although based on different assumptions, focused on students' ability to communicate rather than on the correct use of formal accuracy. On the one hand, the Natural Approach believed that by a comprehensible input the activation of subconscious acquisition of language process would be stimulated. On the other hand, Communicative Language Teaching was based on the belief of the primacy of pragmatic communication. So, both movements claimed the authenticity and the meaningfulness of language rather than the artificiality of the previous focused-form approach. Although they claimed to move away from teacher to student-centredness, they did not include and recognize students' own language. Translation, which implies a conscious knowledge of two language systems, and the deliberate deployment of both, was not compatible with these approaches (Cook 1998: 114).



### 1.2.2 The Revival of Translation

Translation Studies, dated from the second half of the twentieth century, is relatively a new area of research that finally emerged out of other areas of study such as Linguistics, Modern languages, Comparative Literature. Only recently has its role and importance been acknowledged. In academia, translation has always been perceived of a lesser value because it was associated with language teaching and it was perceived to have a subservient role in respect of the original text. The study which paved the way to the establishment of Translation Studies as a fully-fledged discipline was the work *The name and Nature of Translation Studies* by James Holmes (1972) in which the former discussed the nature of translation through the representation of a theoretical system which recognizes and unifies many aspect of translation studies. According to Holmes's map, TS are divided into applied studies and pure research which is in turn subdivided into two branches: theoretical and descriptive which is subdivided into product-oriented, process-oriented and function-oriented approaches. The aim of pure research is to describe the empirical manifestation of translation phenomena and to establish the principles which govern these phenomena. The findings of this area of research are used in Applied Studies in the form of translation training, translation criticism and translation aids. The importance of Holmes's studies lies in the representation of the areas which had been studied and the ones which had been neglected. Therefore it led to the development of a more rational approach to translation.

Since the 1980s evidence of the growing interest in translation has been found in the development of translation training programmes and in the attention to its role as intercultural act. The increasing interest in research gave rise to numerous translation journals such as META, Babel, The Translator, and manuals. Although TS focused more on the improvement of translation teaching, the development of other subfields – sociolinguistics, psychology and applied linguistics – had a great impact on foreign language teaching.

The belief in the primacy of the native-speaker teacher has been surpassed by the major attention on learner's needs, the presence of a more intercultural society and consequently by the use of English as Lingua Franca. This change raised a new awareness: native speakers were not the only who could use the language correctly. This

brought to the reintroduction of no native speakers teachers in the classroom and of translation as part of the foreign language teaching practice.

However, the re-evaluation of translation was also possible thanks to new approaches to TC which shifted the focus from linguistic and formal approach into a functionalist and socio-cultural one. These new theories were based on the assumption that the translation process was not anymore determined by the source text or on the effects it had on the recipients, but it was rather determined by the purpose of the overall translation interaction. Therefore, translating was not seen as transferring a source text into a target text but it was perceived as an intercultural communication act. So,

Translation [...] is no longer the mere transformation of a text from one language to another, but rather the production of a target text that can function within a different context for recipients from a different culture (Vermeer 2001: 61).

Another important concept derived from this theory is the interrelation between language and culture and the possibility to completely understand the message only if it is inserted within the context of that culture. Since the turn of the century, the debate about the place and importance of translation in foreign language teaching has been enriched by many studies which emphasize its role as means of ecological practice, as a learning tool and as means of developing metalinguistic competence.

### **1.2.3 Current Trends**

The proliferation of studies highlighting the importance of translation are the reflection of the multilingual and globalized world in which we live today. The increasing number of mixed marriages, the presence of immigrant communities, international communication highlight the increasing need for translation. At the same time, through an analysis of the differences, translation practice can encourage the encounter between different cultures and societies. Moreover, the constant presence of and resort to native languages can help the preservation of the “identities of the speakers of threatened languages and promoting awareness among speakers of powerful languages of the nature and predicament of

others” (Cook 2010: 116). Although these are interesting ideas which can be applied in a wider perspective, the main reasons behind the re-introduction of translation as a learning tool are the advantages it can have in the acquisition of language proficiency. The numerous research and empirical studies highlight the important role it plays within a language teaching framework.

The main arguments in favour of the use of translation can be summarised in the following points:

- it can help, with the aid of grammar explanation, to clarify complex language structures, especially when L1 and L2 are radically different. Hence, through contrastive analysis, students realise the different manners in which ideas and concepts are expressed in the two languages;
- the connection between translation skills and language competence help L2 acquisition as it is primarily a form of communication;
- since the acquiring of a new language does not obliterate L1 culture, translation competence itself is also seen as an important form of communicative ability which allows learners to develop plurilingual competence;
- translation practice makes the learners’ aware of the sociolinguistic differences between their mother tongue(s) and the foreign language thanks to the development of sociolinguistic competence within the communicative language competence;
- translation into L1 can help students discover the expressive power of their native language in terms of stylistic nuances and competences;
- the increase of language awareness through the use of translation practice allows students to acquire intelligibility, linguistic precision and appropriateness in a foreign language;
- the use of translation as a cognitive tool, allowing student to become aware of language contrasts, reduces the possibility of interference between the two languages;
- the integration of difficulties of various kinds in texts to be translated makes this activity much closer to real life use of languages than other activities may do;

- translation has a positive impact on the semantic level as it is the quickest way of presenting and explaining new vocabulary;
- a more detailed analysis of the text as part of translation practice enhances reading and comprehension skills;
- translation increases the consciousness of language functions and the understanding of the relation between language, thought and culture;
- translation practice helps students to learn how to use monolingual and bilingual dictionaries skillfully;
- translation is a means of developing metalinguistic competence, as it stimulates the reflection on problems such as comprehension of difficult passages in text, the rendering of wordplay, puns or the use of a particular gender (Zojer 2009: 35-36).

It is clear that the wide range of possible uses of translation has been studied and applied in various contexts. Hence, there is a major focus on the use of different translation texts and activities as means of exploring and developing other language skills such as pragmatic, syntactic, metalinguistic and multilingual competences. Moreover, this research did not affect second language teaching but it also had a great impact on the design of translator training. There is still a lively debate on which abilities and knowledge should be taught in this specific area of study because translation training and language courses do not pursue the same goals and objectives. Despite the lack of homogeneity in translation teaching courses, the usefulness of translation as a means of strengthening learner's abilities is widely accepted.

### **1.3 Translation competence**

The notion of competence in Translation Studies has been analyzed from different perspectives. Although some research showed an interest on translation competence around the 1970s, it is in the 1990s that many studies started focusing their attention on the issue. Since translation is an interdisciplinary field of study, its various components

have been studied by different disciplines. Hence, it is not easy to clearly frame the concept of translation within this context. As a consequence, there is not a unique definition of what translation practice is and how translation competence should be built and developed. Although the studies on translation ability are relatively recent and they lack of a solid empirical research, this notion is particularly important in translation didactics as it creates the basis on which pedagogical methods in the language teaching and translation training courses should be used. Therefore, the notion of competence can be used pedagogically to develop psychological models of translation process, to evaluate the quality of the product and to teach translation. According to the different application, the definitions and the models of competence might vary. If we focus on its use in didactics, a clear definition is fundamental in order to establish the skills and the sub-competences which learners should acquire during their studies.

The lack of a generally accepted definition and a model of translation competence reflects the non-homogenous terminology within TS. It has been referred to with different terms such as translation competence, translation ability, translation performance, translation skill. These terminological issues go side by side with problems of definition. On the one hand, there are several authors who focused their research on the acquisition of translation competence without defining it clearly. On the other hand, many authors partially focused on it since its notion was used as a means to introduce other issues such as the translator training curriculum.

According to Neubert (2000: 4), the reasons for the absence of a clear definition are to ascribed to the complexity of the phenomenon itself. In fact, translating as a process is both a complex and multifarious activity. Its complexity is due to the variable tasks and cognitive skills which makes it completely different from all other language-based professions. Its multifariousness refers to the wide range of subjects and to the specialist knowledge translators should possess.

In general, the concept of translation competence had shifted from a linguistic definition into a cognitive and constructivist approach in the 1980s and the 1990s and finally to a new perspective which has been influenced by technology and the increasing concern for the professional needs. The increasing attention to the market components had changed the manner in which translation competence had been perceived: a multi-componential ability formed by technological, cultural and linguistic skills emerged. The

lively debate about TC derives from the lack of clear boundaries among some disciplines such as Comparative Literature, Applied Linguistics, Linguistics and Translation Studies. The unclear and non-unique definition of this type of competence is the result of the intricate history of TS during its affirmation as an independent discipline.

Since TS was firstly conceived as part of the Linguistics, the first notion of competence coincided with the linguistic one. Chomsky (1957) was the first scholar who set the concept of competence against the one of performance, respectively the system of linguistic knowledge and the manner in which the language system is used in communication. Competence was an unconscious mental faculty reached at the end of a process of biological growth. According to Chomsky, it is an innate characteristic of any adult native speaker of a language. However, his definition of competence did not correspond to the one of ability, but rather to a psychological attribute used to communicate.

Although “any model of communication is a model of translation” (Steiner 1975: 45), translation is more than a mere communicative ability. Therefore, the competencies of a translator are quite different from those of monolingual communicators. During the communicative act their decoding operation involves and requires different skills:

For the translator, the encoding consists of re-encoding into a different language, concerns the same message as was received and is aimed at a group of receivers who are not the same as the original sender. (Bell 1991: 15)

Hence, the translation operation was viewed as primarily a transcoding operation (Vandeweghe *et al.* 2007: 1). The early linguistic approaches tended to assume that translation and linguistic competence coincided. In the 1970s, according to the general assumption that defined bilinguals as natural translators, it was believed that both abilities could be developed through the acquisition of the two languages involved. This theory based on innatism was supported by different scholars such as Harris (1973) and Toury (1984). According to Harris (1973: 99) “in addition to some competence in two languages Li to Lj, [...] all bilinguals possess a third competence, that of translating from Li to Lj and vice versa”. Hence, because of their multilingual knowledge, bilinguals can translate naturally without any specific training. Investigating the development of *natural translation* in children, Harris stated that they have an innate verbal skill which allows the translation skill to emerge. Although Toury (1984: 191) shared the idea of natural

translation, he believed that the acquisition of translation ability was dependent on some feedbacks coming from the environment the translator was surrounded by:

In every phase of the 'natural' course of the development of a translator[...], his competence reflects a certain balance between nature and nurture, between the humanly innate disposition and the internalized social factors. (Toury 1984: 191)

Therefore, he claimed that bilingualism and interlingual skills were not sufficient conditions for translation competence.

Despite the presence of this bi-directional competence, many studies on the problems derived from translations done by bilinguals have shown them to be usually poor translators. Hence, it was demonstrated that bilingual skills are not sufficient for the development of academic translation competence. Some psychological skills of bilinguals are required, but also the acquisition of other types of knowledge and abilities other than the linguistic ones. Nowadays, TC is widely conceived as an ability which requires specific theoretical and practical knowledge.

Sometimes the word expertise has been used in TS as synonymous with competence. The reason for the use of this term dates back to the 1980s. At that time, the interest in the psychological and linguistic mechanisms involved in the translation process modified the manner in which translation was studied. The previous focus on the target text was replaced by the attention for translators and their actions thanks to the development of functional theories of translation and cognitive research. Since mental processes are not directly observable, numerous tools have been used to try to understand the cognitive process of translation such as Think-Aloud Protocols, eye-tracking, neurological EEG measurements of brain activity, tracking/logging the translation process on computer screens. Contemporaneously to the development of the first systems in Artificial Intelligence, modern research on translator's ability started. Within this revolution, TS had started to equate the concept of competence with the one of expertise applied in cognitive science.

Drawing from Hubert and Dreyfus's analysis (1986) on the acquisition of the expertise, Chesterman (2000: 147) defines the five necessary stages to develop translation competence. They include:

1. novice. At this stage the trainee learns to recognize the features and the facts relevant to translation competence and acquires the rules in order to decide the actions to be taken. At this level, the behavior is fully conscious, easily verbalized, and atomistic (Chesterman 2000: 147);
2. advanced beginner. By experiencing real situations, the trainee is also able to recognize the facts that are not defined explicitly by finding similarities with prior examples. At this level, behavior is still conscious and less easily verbalized and atomistic (Chesterman 2000: 147);
3. competence. Trainees develop a sense of priorities in decision-making process as it is impossible to hold consciously all the relevant features. So, the information process is also accompanied by problem-solving skills. At this stage, they make a conscious and responsible choice according to the features that are most relevant to the determined goals;
4. proficiency. The knowledge of rules, processing information and the making of choices have been consolidated. However, at this level, the decision-making process relies more on personal experience rather than on formal rules. Intuition and hence the comprehension process move from an atomistic to a holistic one even though analytical thinking is still involved;
5. expertise. At expert level intuition takes place and rationality is involved as a means of testing and improving intuitions. This process of reflection aims at the improvement of performance.

This skill acquisition problem is seen as a gradual automatization: it goes from atomistic to holistic recognition, from conscious to unconscious responses, from analytical to intuitive decision making, from calculative to deliberative rationality, from detached to involved commitment.(Chesterman 2000: 147)

Nevertheless, it has been criticized by different scholars because expertise is now believed to be quite different from professionalism. While the first refers to the adherence of the norms and conventions, the latter refers to the compliance to the social and ethical norms of the profession. It has been observed that experience does not necessarily imply expertise intended as superior performance. The achievement of a high level of performance is not the result of an accumulation of experience, but rather of a long and qualified practical experience in a specific subject area.



The evolution of the translation profession, the technological revolution and the development of many kinds of translation software have radically changed the abilities required by translators. Nowadays, translators have to accomplish a wide range of tasks from documentation to rewriting and all kinds of activities required by the translation industry. Today, translators are placed in a complex network of social and professional actions. They play a crucial role in the success of commercial contacts, legal interaction and medical and technical operations (Kiraly 2000: 13). In this scenario, professionals need more competencies than linguistic and translation ones. They should be able to use the tools of the trade, to research new topics rapidly, to justify one's translation and to negotiate and collaborate with other translators and experts to complete the work. Therefore, *translation* competence became *translator* competence. This includes the ability to communicate efficiently with new communities of experts in different cultural environments, the identification and recognition of their different norms, the ability to work co-operatively and to contribute to the evolving conversation that constitutes those communities (Kiraly 2000: 14). In his volume on translator education, Gouadec (2007: 120) lists a number of competencies and skills which professionals are expected to possess:

The new translator must in fact be ready [...to become] an information management expert, technician, terminologist, phraseologist, translator, adapter, proof-reader, reviser, quality control expert, post-editor, editor, graphic design expert and Web page designer, technical writer, Web site designer, Web page integrator, file manager, macro-command writer and in some cases IT specialist, all rolled into one.

This idea of a multicomponential competence can also be found in Gambier's "competence for professionals translators". In his report commissioned by European Master's in Translation, translation and service provision are the cornerstones around which the other abilities revolve. The emphasis on the interpersonal and production dimensions of the service provision places the awareness of market's needs and the quality of the outcome in a predominant position in translation training.

The reasons for the ever-growing list of competencies required to translators have been analyzed by Pym in his article advocating a minimalist approach to translation: the focus on linguistics by the earlier scholars, the interdisciplinarity of Translation Studies, the evolution of the profession itself and the need to legitimate the current curriculum of most translation training programs. As Pym pointed out, even though translators need to possess skills related to market awareness and the use of technological and professional

tools, their competence is not only linguistic or commercial but rather “it is a process of generation and selection, a problem-solving process that often occurs with apparent automatism” (2003: 489). This does not mean that he refuses the multicomponential aspect of the profession, but rather he accepts the complexity of translation competence with a clear distinction between means (e.g. translation memories) and ends (e.g. the ability to revise the target text for publication). However, the coexistence of different and opposite approaches and definition of translation competence still characterizes TS and consequently the design of translation programs.

### **1.3.1 Defining Translation Competence**

The complexity, the fragmentation and the interdisciplinarity of TS is reflected in the various definitions of translation competence and in the several models of acquisition and development which derives from it. There is no general consensus within academia on the meaning of the term ‘competence’ and empirical research on the issue is still scarce and in some cases possibly inadequate. Moreover, some authors mention the term without any definition or use it with different meanings or rather they refer to the same concept with different terms.

According to Orozco and Hurtado Albir (2002: 376) there are only four explicit definitions of translation competence:

- The knowledge and the skills the translator should possess in order to carry out a translation.
- The ability to know how to translate.
- The interlingual competence[...] based on a comprehensive knowledge of the respective SL and TL, including the text-pragmatic dimension, and consists of the ability to integrate the two monolingual competencies on a higher level.
- The underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be able to translate.

According to Pym (2003: 489), it is possible to group the different notions of translation competence into four categories:

- competence as a summation of linguistic competencies. Translators should only possess linguistic skills in two languages in order to transfer the meaning of the source text into the target text;
- competence as no such thing. The confusion deriving from the collocation of the concept of translation competence' on the Chomskyan side of the competence or on the side of performance brought to the disappearance of the term in favour of other alternatives such as skills, mapping abilities, performance ability;
- competence as multicomponential. Translation competence is conceived as a series of sub-components, not only strictly related to the process itself, which make it a complex and interdisciplinary concept;
- competence as just one thing. Translation competence is seen as a supercompetence above the other linguistic sub-components.

Finally, the scholar proposes a definition of translation competence composed by two abilities which just involve the translation operation:

- the ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT1, TT2 ... TTn) for a pertinent source text (ST);
- the ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence (Pym 2003: 489).

This definition of translator competence has the advantage to focus attention on the process itself without listing an ever-increasing number of abilities and skills translators should acquire. However, this minimalist approach does not provide the sufficient degree of specification to define concretely the skills and strategies translation students should develop in order to select effectively these viable target texts within the huge amount of possibilities offered.

Recent definitions of translation competence go into two different directions: professionalism and didactics. Although they both focus on cognitive aspects of translation, didactic approaches focus more on pragmatic and transfer skills while professional ones include the knowledge and abilities required by the profession, such as organizational and managing skills. However, current models of translation competence tend to introduce professional abilities as well, such as project-management and instrumental competencies.

### 1.3.2 Modelling Translation Competence

Despite the different directions in defining and conceptualizing translation competence, all the models proposed by scholars are multicomponential, even though there is no general agreement on which sub-components should be included. Therefore, translation competence is seen as a macrocompetence which is often broken down “into a set of interrelated sub-competences, which can be studied in isolation, as well as in combination with others” (Schäffner 2000: ix). However, nothing is said about the acquisition and development of these related skills in educational practice. These models are all:

static box-like representations of an ideal(ised) relationship between dispositions, abilities and skills that professional translators can be expected to possess and be able to use when translating (Király 2013: 201).

Although the models of translation competence are often interrelated to each other, all of them identifies different sub-competencies. Among some scholars who investigated translation competence, Wills (1976: 120) defines it as:

- a receptive competence in the source text which is the capacity to decode the original message;
- a productive competence in the target text which is the ability to understand and use the linguistic and textual resource of the target text;
- a supercompetence that is the ability to transfer the original message to the L2 considering the characteristics of each language.

According to the scholar, translation is perceived as a mental process that integrates and combines the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic levels of the source and the target text with the aim to create equivalent meaning between the two messages. Translation competence is conceived as the union of innate skills and learning training.

Roberts’ definition (1984: 181) of TC is more articulated and is formed by five sub-components: linguistic, translation, methodological, disciplinary and technical competences.

- *[compétence] linguistique (capacité de comprendre la langue de départ et qualité d'expression de la langue d'arrivée);*
- *traductionnelle (capacité de saisir l'articulation du sens dans un texte, de le rendre sans le déformer dans la langue d'arrivée tout en évitant les interférences);*
- *méthodologique (capacité de se documenter sur un sujet donné et d'assimiler la terminologie propre au domaine);*
- *disciplinaire (capacité de traduire des textes dans quelques disciplines de base, telles que l'économie, l'informatique, le droit);*
- *technique (capacité d'utiliser diverses aides à la traduction, telles que traitement de texte, banques de terminologie, machines à dicter etc.).*

By contrast, Lowe's model (1987) moves away from this previous definition since he also includes concepts such as rapidity, style and cultural and social factors. According to his perspective, TC is constituted by these abilities: written comprehension of the source text; written production of the target text; stylistic identification and proficiency of the two languages involved; understanding of the socio-cultural characteristics of the target language; rapidity and another undefined factor which renders the quality of translation superior than other translation of the same text.

According to Bell (1991: 36), translators should possess the same abilities required by communicators (except for the linguistic knowledge of L1 and L2) plus the ability to decode and encode the two written texts. Therefore translators' competencies include different types of abilities: source language, target language, text type, subject area and contrastive knowledge of each of the above. Being Bell's model influenced by the Chomskyan ideal speaker-hearer, TC is considered as an internal thinking operation which analysis can improve the efficiency of the process and translation training curriculum.

Neubert (2000 : 6 ) defines TC as the ability to cope with the different cognitive skills required by translation. It is conceived as an interrelation of seven basilar features: complexity, heterogeneity, approximation, open-endedness, situationality, historicity and

creativity. However, there are five abilities which distinguish translators from other language users:

- linguistic competence. The perfect knowledge of the grammatical and lexical characteristics of the source and target texts. This type of ability involves the awareness of the differences in syntactic and social conventions in both languages and the acquisition of specific terminology;
- textual competence. Translators should be expert in textual norms of the original and target texts and should be able to manage specialized areas of knowledge;
- subject competence. Translators are life-long learners since this type of skill is never exhaustive. They do not need to know everything about the subject but their knowledge should be broad enough to satisfy professional standards and meet emerging market requirements;
- cultural knowledge. This sub-component refers to all types of texts since all of them are somehow conveying cultural meaning. Therefore, translators should possess intercultural competence in order to be able to successfully mediate between the two texts;
- transfer competence. Translators are judged on this type of ability, that is the capacity to render L2 texts into an L1.

Transfer competence is the one which integrates all the other abilities and its presence makes translation operation possible. Clearly translators need to acquire proficiency in all the other four abilities otherwise the equivalence between L1 and L2 cannot be achieved. Moreover, the right understanding and relation of the five sub-components is essential for the production of an adequate translation and the analysis of the translation process.

According to Nord (1991: 235), translation competence should also include the ability to assess the quality of the product:

The essential competences required of a translator [*are*] competence of text reception and analysis, research competence, transfer competence, competence of text production, competence of translation quality assessment, and, of course, linguistic and cultural competence both on the source and the target side.

Recently, translation competence models have started to move towards a more dynamic conceptualization since all of the existing static models did not derive from

empirical research, but rather from an idea of what translation might work and how translators might perform. The empirical approach to translation competence has been influenced by the increasing interest in the observation of the translation practice of professionals and students. The possibility of testing and reformulating the models proposed through empirical research is one of the important methodological revolution of Translation Studies. This empirical turn dates back to the mid-1980s with the development of the ‘Think-aloud Protocol’ (TAP) method.

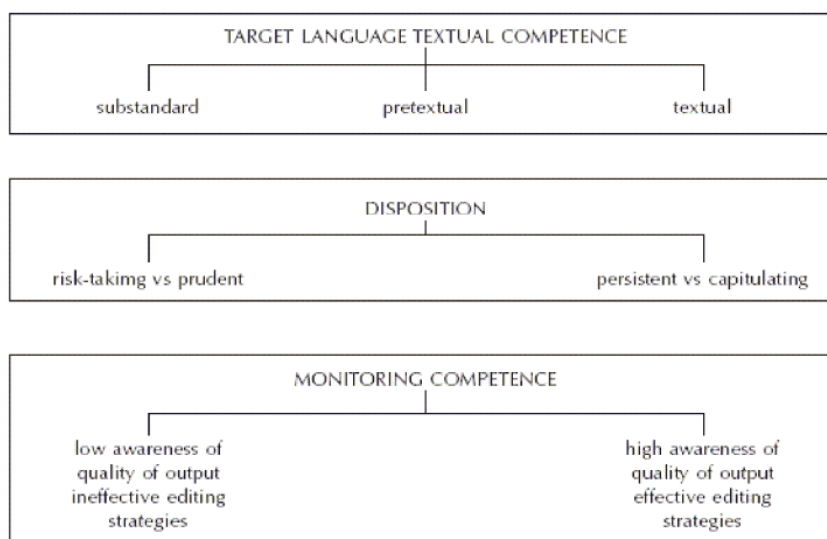
Although the first process-oriented studies were essentially based on TAPs, in the mid-1990s the research moved to the triangulation perspective. This method is considered more reliable because the use of different instruments of data collection gives the possibility to observe translation from several viewpoints. The union of these data coming from various gathering methods drew the attention on both the process and the product.

### **1.3.3 Models of Translation Competence: Some Examples**

The proliferation of empirical research was also influenced by the varied interdisciplinary approaches of Translation Studies. Hence, translation competence models were analyzed by different perspectives such as cognitive, educational or professional approaches. One of the first model based on empirical research was conducted by Campbell (1991: 339). In this study, he investigated translation process from L2 to L1, basing his research on the analysis of English-Arabic test papers. According to the scholar, TC consists of three abilities:

- target language textual competence which includes target language proficiency and lexical transfer;
- monitoring competence which corresponds to the degree of awareness of the quality of the input and the effectiveness of editing strategies;
- disposition which refers to the psychological qualities and the attitudes of the behavior of the translator.

A good translator was supposed to have textual competence, being risk-taking but persistent. Despite some limitations of the model (the exclusion of some relevant aspects of TC and the union of the transcoding and transferring acts as they were sufficient to explain how translation competence works), the presence of the notion of disposition has to be considered as an important innovation within the translation field. Recent cognitive models draw the attention to some aspects of translator's personality. Despite the undeniable role it plays on the development of competence, it should not perhaps be included in translation models, but rather analyzed as an independent characteristic.



**Figure 1: Campbell's translation competence model (Source: Campbell 1998: 154).**

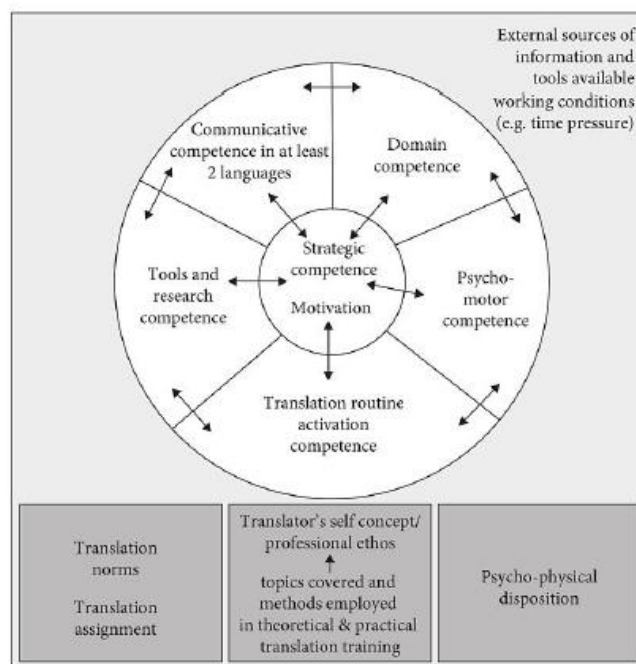
In 2007 the University of Graz proposed a longitudinal empirical research on the development of translation competence (Göpferich 2009). This type of study is not common in TS because the measurement of the same data on the same sample at regular intervals might be difficult in terms of time needed for data collection, the development of specific tools, the control of the variables and constant participation of the sample. TransComp is considered one of the most important contributions to translation competence as there are very few longitudinal studies within this area. The sample was constituted of twelve students who translated from English to German. The focus was on the cognitive process of translation and on the problems and strategies adopted by



participants. This research was based on the TC model proposed by Göpferich (2009) which combines together two existent translation models by the PACTE Group (2000; 2003; cf. Chapter 3) and by Hönig (1991). According to Göpferich, TC is formed by six principal sub-components:

- the communicative language competences in at least two languages which includes knowledge of the lexicon, grammar and the pragmatic features of the texts such as genre type and social conventions;
- domain competence which refers to the extra knowledge needed for a deep understanding of the source text and a good reformulation of the target text.
- Tools and research competence which is the ability to use all translation-specific tools such as term banks, parallel texts, corpora and machine translation systems;
- translation routine activation competence which comprises the capacity to transfer the meaning successfully in order to have an acceptable equivalence in the L2 text;
- psychomotor competence which concerns the ability to read and write with electronic tools. It has been found that the more this ability is evolved, the more other cognitive tasks can be developed;
- strategic competence corresponding to a macro-strategy which establishes hierarchies between the sub-competences and it also includes internal and external motivations.

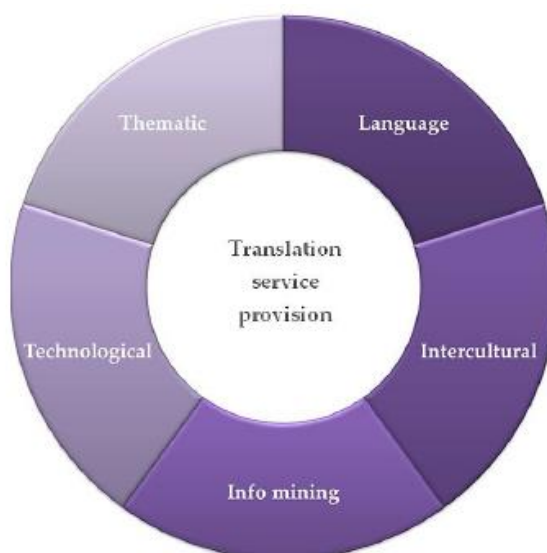
The components which form translation competence are represented as interrelated to each other, with the strategic competence having a central position.



**Figure 2: Göpferich's TransComp model (Source: Göpferich 2013: 615)**

Moreover, the scholar identifies other three factors which are at the basis of her model: the translation brief, the translator's ethos and psycho-physical disposition. The TransComp research focused more on the sub-components which are believed to be distinctive aspects of translation competence: strategic, translation routine activation and tools and research competences.

The European Master's in Translation (ETM) is a project within the European Union which aims to "promote quality standards in translation training and in related professions via a common framework of minimum professional competences" (EMT Expert Group 2013). Based on the request made by the Directorate-General for Translation, a group of several experts elaborated a multicomponential model of translation competence. However, this model has never been empirically verified though it is largely based on the studies carried out by the TransComp and PACTE Group. According to ETM, translation ability is the "combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given [translation] task under given conditions" (EMT Expert Group 2009: 3). The ETM model consists of six sub-competences: language, intercultural, information mining, technological, thematic and translation service provision competences.



**Figure 3: EMT model of translation competence (Source: EMT Expert Group 2009: 4).**

According to this model, all the areas of competences are transversal, interrelated and their combination determines the minimum requirement of TC.

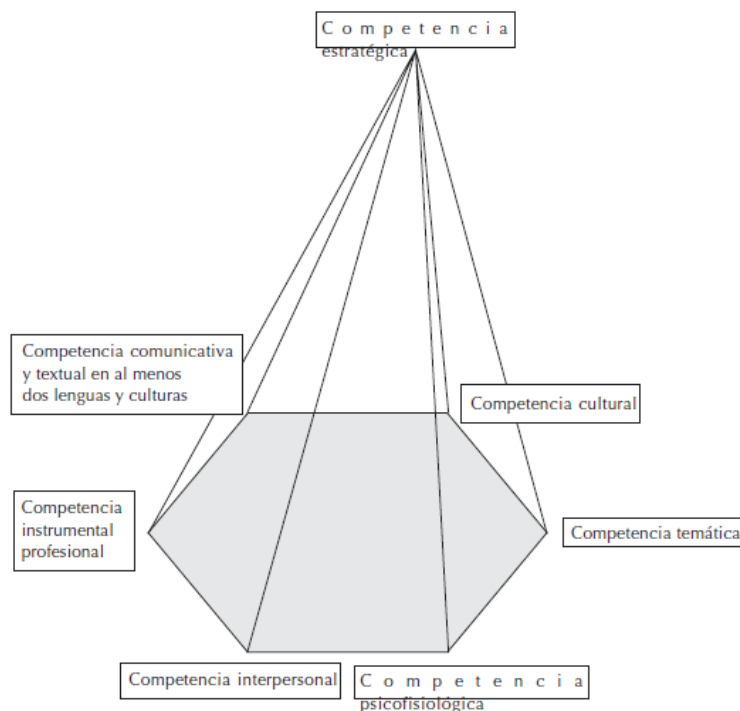
Kelly (2002: 14) proposed a model of translation competence for didactic purposes based on the direct observation of the professional world and on the literature. The scholar defines translation competence as a macro-competence formed by seven sub-components which are necessary for the professional translation experts:

La competencia traductora es la macrocompetencia que constituye el conjunto de capacidades, destrezas, conocimientos e incluso actitudes que reúnen los traductores profesionales y que intervienen en la traducción como actividad experta y que se desglosa en las subcompetencias necesarias para el éxito de la macrocompetencia.

The sub-competences identified by Kelly include:

- communicative and textual competence in at least two languages which involves the passive and active stage of communication plus textual conventions;
- cultural competence which refers to the encyclopedic knowledge and the values, beliefs and behavioural patterns related to the languages involved;
- subject area knowledge which corresponds to thematic knowledge possessed by translators;
- professional and instrumental competence which comprises term bank, terminology and all the necessary tools used in translation;

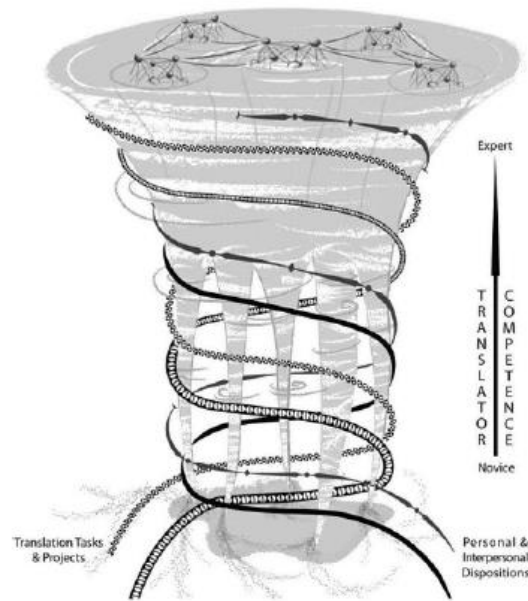
- attitudinal competence which includes memory and attention abilities and professional awareness;
- interpersonal competence which refers to the interpersonal skills such as the ability to work and interact with authors, clients, revisers and other experts;
- strategic competence which involves all the organizational aspects and problem-solving skills.



**Figure 4: Translation model proposed by Kelly (Source: Kelly 2002: 15).**

The pyramidal representation of model is justified by the fact that though all the sub-competences are interrelated, strategic competence is the one which controls the employment of all the others. Although these sub-components can be shared by other professionals, their specific combination represents the peculiar feature of TC.

By contrast, Kirarly (2013) proposed a three-dimensional model of proficiency because he believes that all the existing bi-dimensional models do not reflect the complexity of the translation process. Moreover, the absence of a list of sub-competences is related to the absence of agreement on which components form translation competence.



**Figure 5: Kiraly's model of translation competence (Source: Kiraly 2013)**

According to this model, translator competence “is not built up bit by bit through the accretion of knowledge, but creates itself through the translator’s embodied involvement (habitus) in actual translation experience” (Kiraly 2013: 203). In the initial stage, the sub-competences are represented as small, distinct vortices. As the competence grows, the vortices get closer and interrelated to each other. Therefore, in the expertise level a single vortex emerges. The dynamicity of the models cannot permit the establishment *a priori* of the number of the links among the sub-components.

On the ground of these considerations, the present research proposed a product-oriented approach to the measurement of the development of TC. To this end, PACTE’s model will be used and adapted to my sample (cf. Chapter 3). The following chapter illustrates the didactic curriculum of the undergraduate course at the University of Padua, with particular reference to the English courses.

## CHAPTER 2

After a general overview on the different notions of translation and on the several approaches to translation competence, in this chapter I will introduce the educational background of my research sample. The aim of my study is to measure the development of the translation competence in second- and third-year students of the undergraduate course *Mediazione Linguistica e culturale*, at the University of Padua. However, before introducing my investigation and the analysis of my results, I will focus on the whole curriculum of the aforementioned bachelor degree paying particular attention to the content of the English courses. , The theoretical and applied background possessed by students is an important factor which could influence the translation competence process. However, it does not mean that students' performance is the consequence of the education system of the English modules. Several factors play an important role in the level of translation competence acquired by students such as expectations and motivation, learning style and approaches, prior knowledge and experience, and personal characteristics.

### 2.1 The Bachelor Degree in Linguistic and Cultural Mediation

In the 1980s, the increasing presence of foreign populations in the Italian territory led to the origin of a new professional figure: the linguistic and cultural mediator. In 1999, the reform of the Italian University System instituted the bachelor degree in *Mediazione linguistica e culturale*.

In a broad sense, according to the Oxford dictionary, the verb “to mediate” means to “intervene in a dispute in order to bring about an agreement or reconciliation”. In a linguistic acceptance, as pointed out by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language, mediation enables a successful communication between people of different languages:

the written and/or oral activities of mediation make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a [spoken or written] source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediating language activities – (re)processing an existing text – occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies (CEFR 2001: 4).

This notion of mediation does not refer to the professional activity, but rather to our multilingual society. Mediation should be integrated in language teaching education as a component of the communicative competence. According to the Council of Europe, Linguistic Mediation is conceived as a superordinate term which includes any interlinguistic activity, oral or written, which generates a flow of information between people, in both professional and everyday life.

Nevertheless, the Italian regulation on the subject does not follow the definition of the CEFR. The ability to mediate is considered as a separate skill possessed by professionals, distinct from linguistic skills of L1 and L2. Moreover, in the Italian reform on the different types of degree, the term *mediazione* is combined with the adjectives *linguistica* and *culturale*. In the 1980s (corresponding to the Cultural Turn identified by Mary Snell-Hornby) the importance of the cultural component in any interlinguistic communicative act started to be recognized. Some authors emphasize the important role played by Linguistic and Cultural Mediators in our society, even though this importance is not recognized in the working environment. For instance, Castorina (2006: 10) underlines the relevant role of the linguistic and cultural mediation in the complex modern society in which linguistic and translation abilities interact with several scientific, socio-political and ethic competences (Blini 2006: 131). According to Garzone (2007: 23), this new degree course is more articulated than the one in Interpretation and Translation as its multidisciplinary nature can eliminate Eurocentrism in favour of a deep understanding of the contemporary multi-ethnic world where we live.

According to the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research (MIUR), the bachelor degree in *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* leads to the formation of different professionals such as translators, interpreters, linguistic experts and intercultural mediators (operating in multicultural contexts for the defence of dialects and language minorities). This hybrid figure should possess a wide range of abilities such as linguistic and technical skills, metalinguistic competence and basic knowledge of economic, historical, literary and anthropologic areas. However, there is no homogeneity of the

curriculum in the Italian University. The impossibility to totally cover all the areas during the bachelor degree results in the presence of different curricula and subjects from which students can choose.

## **2.2 Cultural and Linguistic Mediation at the University of Padua**

According to the description on the website of the University of Padua, the bachelor degree in *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* aims at the training of new professional figures with linguistic, economic, legal, sociologic and cultural competences. These abilities are considered fundamental for the mediation activity in private and public organizations or in international bodies. The educational training is based on the study of two languages and pays particular attention to the relative literature and culture and to the translation activity. Moreover, the curriculum includes other subjects such as Italian Literature, Linguistics and knowledge of world history and geography.

The educational goals of the degree course are:

- a good linguistic and cultural knowledge of two language and of their culture;
- linguistic and technical abilities, both oral and written, supported by metalinguistic awareness;
- basic knowledge of linguistic analysis and specific competences related to the structure of languages;
- basic knowledge of one of the following areas: economics, law, history and politics, literature or geography and anthropology;
- the ability to successfully use communication and computer tools;
- knowledge of the intercultural and local problems in several sectors such as public, tourist and environmental organizations.



In order to fulfil the above goals, the education curriculum includes:

- linguistic activities aimed at the acquisition of written and oral competence in Italian and in other two languages and the ability to successfully mediate between different cultures;
- translation as a means to achieve a good mediation competence in written texts;
- economics and law useful for the fulfilment of the other objectives of the bachelor degree.

According to the European descriptors indicating the learning outcomes, after the three-year undergraduate course, the competences acquired by the students are:

- knowledge and comprehension, referring to written and oral competence in two European languages and possibly of a basic knowledge of a third one, and to good background knowledge of in economics and culture, as well as in-depth knowledge of the linguistics of the languages the students study;
- applying knowledge and comprehension, comprising the ability to use properly analytic and conceptual tools in order to interpret Italian and foreign language texts dealing with different specific areas;
- making judgements, including the ability to understand, to analyze critically and create specialized texts in two foreign languages, as well as the ability to research the theoretical linguistic and expressive mechanisms of the languages studied;
- communication skills, including the ability to manage and communicate the acquired competences to both experts and inexpert on the subject. Moreover, the graduate should be able to work in a team keeping a certain degree of autonomy;
- learning skills, referring to the development of skills necessary for better professional and cultural education.

The employment opportunities of the bachelor degree in *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* are manifold. Graduates can work in different sectors such as private and public bodies operating in multicultural contexts, cultural services, European and international institutions and tourism.

## **2.2.1 The English Curriculum of the Degree Course “Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale”**

In the bachelor degree *Mediazione linguistica e culturale*, the students who decide to learn English as first or second language have to attend and participate in several types of classes in order to achieve at the end of the three-year course the C1 level established by the CEFR. Each year, students attend theoretical lectures and practical sessions in which the four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – are trained and improved. In their first year at university, students do not take translation classes as it is believed that translation ability can be developed and acquired only when students have an adequate level of competence in the language studied. The metalinguistic awareness can be developed only after good knowledge of the language is acquired. Moreover, students should possess a basic knowledge on the structural characteristics of the natural languages they study and should be able to analyse texts in all the languages they know. After the study and the acquisition of this type of abilities and knowledge, students are introduced to the translation world. In the second and third year, they take translation classes from Italian into English and from English into Italian in order to understand and contrast punctuation, linguistic, semantic and syntactic differences between their mother tongue and the foreign language involved.

Although my research focuses on the analysis of the translation competence of second- and third-year students, I will briefly summarize the whole English curriculum because translation ability is strictly interrelated to the other set of linguistic skills trained in the other courses.

### **2.2.1.1 English Language and Translation 1**

Since the aim of the bachelor degree is to achieve a good linguistic and cultural knowledge corresponding to the C1 level of the CEFR, first-year students are expected to have already acquired a B1 level during their high-school education. The aim of the

course was to consolidate their linguistic ability with the result of a B2-B2+ level. Moreover, the development of the metalinguistic ability and the strategies for language learning, as well as the awareness of the linguistic characteristics of the contemporary English are the main target skills.

The course is divided into two parts: ‘General English’ and ‘An introduction to Academic Language Skills’. The first part is based on groupwork and it is focused on the acquisition of general language skills and on listening comprehension and writing skills and on the use of concordancer to explore texts. The second part is focused on language (lexical choices, grammar, phraseology, register variation), on the use of Learner Dictionary and corpora and on the development of language skills for an academic environment (note-taking, identification of key information of a text, summarize and report writing). Moreover, students are introduced to the use of software for computer-mediated communication.

Although students do not translate texts, they are expected to translate sentences or small parts of a text in order to reflect on the translation task and its consequent linguistic and pragmatic features. Moreover, some reflections on the quest for equivalence and on the qualities a good translator should possess are mentioned in the last lessons.

### **2.2.1.2 English Language and Translation 2**

After a general first- year course in which students have started to have a linguistic approach in the study of the language, the *Lingua e traduzione inglese 2* course aims at the development of translation competence, both active and passive. Moreover, students should hone their receptive and productive skills reaching the B2 level of the CEFR. They should also be able to analyse written and oral texts through a basic background in English Linguistics.

The two parts forming the course centre on different aspects: one on English grammar and active translation and the other one on writing and passive translation. The first one

explores some aspects of English lexico-grammar from a descriptive, functional and contrastive perspective. In particular, it focuses on the situational context (field, formal vs. informal language), on noun phrases (pre- and post-modification, genitive, embedded clauses and phrases), on clause types (phrasal verbs, modality, clause structure) and on passive voice, cleft sentences, inversions and theme/rheme alternation. The first part is also formed by an EN>IT laboratory on tourist and ecological texts (cf. section 2.3). The second part of the course, both in classroom and laboratory, aims at the improvement of spoken comprehension and production and of written production and translation. It pays attention to the report writing, translation of texts (business and tourism) from Italian into English, business correspondence and informal and formal spoken production in English, focusing on language strategies such as signposting, reformulation and polite interruptions.

### **2.2.1.3 English-Italian Translation Laboratory**

In this part of the second-year course students deal with translation activity for the first time during their degree course. The course consists of theoretical and practical issues in passive translation (EN>IT) with the aim to develop the ability to analyse texts at micro (lexico-grammar) and macro (function/genre) level, to effectively approach to translation, and to produce target texts with lexical, syntactic and pragmatic accuracy. The structure of the course is based on groupwork: students are divided into groups and they need to carry out a translation task each week. Moreover, students' translations are revised and the translation problems and strategies are highlighted in an acceptable version of the translation proposed by the teacher.

The first theoretical lesson gives a general explanation on the meaning of translation and on the issue of the right equivalence between the source and the target texts. For this reason, the focus is on the several features of texts such as text type and form, topic, audience and time. In the second lesson, the translation process is explored and some strategies are introduced such as background information and terminological research. Moreover, some attention is paid to the importance of the context, of the right position of

the adjectives, of the punctuation and of the differences between English and Italian (i.e. the use of “you” and nominalization vs. verbalization). After this theoretical background, students are expected to learn by translating in a team in order to find the best strategy to adopt in the production of the target text.

### **2.2.1.4 English Language and Translation 3**

The theoretical study on the language and the practice on the different characteristics between L1 and L2 should allow third-year students to reach the C1 level of the CEFR. Students are also expected to achieve a high level of competence in passive translation and a good level in active translation. Moreover, they should acquire fundamentals of English Linguistics and the relationship between language, culture and society.

The course is divided into four parts: Academic writing, EN>IT and IT>EN translation, and Oral Skills. The first part is focused on the consolidation of writing skills, focusing of the features of the written text such as citations, register, position of the adverbs, modal verbs, punctuation. Students are asked to write several essays during the semester in order to practice their writing skills and also to develop critical thinking and the ability to support a thesis. Although the production task is individual, students are often required to work in a team to comment and analyse peers’ work. The second part of the course is centered on the analysis of problems and strategies of translation. (see section 2.5). The IT>EN translation course aims at the acquisition of awareness of the linguistic and cultural differences between languages such as conditionals, puns and idiomatic language. Although students are asked to work as a team in the creation of a group translation, they also have to make an individual translation. Moreover, student are introduced to the use of CAT Tools with the aim to create translation memory and glossaries. The fourth part of the course aims at the development of the oral production and interaction skills at level C1 of the CEFR. Every week, before going to class, students are expected to read a text and complete the exercises in order to have basic knowledge

on the issue that will be discussed in class. Moreover, in class they are asked to comment on some topics presented in the listening activities.

### **2.2.1.5 Translation From English into Italian**

This part of the third-year English course deals with passive translation. At this stage of their degree course, students are required to possess a good knowledge of English phonetics, phonology, morphosyntax and semantics at both theoretical and practical level. At the end of this part, students are expected to acquire fundamentals in the analysis, review, revision and translation of promotional and advertising texts. Moreover, they should develop the necessary awareness of the linguistic and cultural differences in order to select the more suitable methods and strategies for translation.

Each week students are asked to translate, in groups, different texts which are first revised by the teacher and then corrected again by students. Therefore, students are not presented with the right version of translation, but rather they are stimulated to reflect and analysis their own translation task and are requested to successfully overcome the difficulties and problems they have found. The groups are formed of four people: Each component carries out different functions in order to have a clear idea of the manner in which translation activities work in the professional world. Therefore, the four components of the group act as: project manager, terminologist, translator and reviser.

Each lesson is focused on different topics concerning the textual features of promotional texts. The first lesson centers the attention on the identification of the text as a linguistic “whole” consisting of interconnected sentences. Therefore, discourse markers, information structure, connecting links and the division in paragraphs are explored. Moreover, the importance of a correct reading comprehension for the success of the translation task is highlighted. During the course, students are asked to reflect on some socio-cultural aspects of the translation such as language variation and the choice of an adequate register.

## 2.3 Pedagogical Translation

In the last decades, many scholars focused their attention on translators training, proposing new curriculum design and a wide range of teaching materials. However, pedagogical translation, which refers to the use of the translation as a language learning tool, did not share the same fate.

According to Vermes (Marqués-Aguado 2013: 39), pedagogical translation differs from real translation in terms of:

- function. Pedagogical translation is a means through which language skills are improved, while in real translation the translated text is the goal of the translation activity;
- object. The difference between the two types of translation lies in the information contained: one reflects student's ability, the other gives information of a real content;
- addressee. In pedagogical translation the audience of the text is the teacher, while real translations have a wider range of addressees.

As pointed out by Duff (1989: 7):

depending on the students' needs, and on the syllabus, the teacher can select the material to illustrate particular aspects of language and structure with which the students have difficulty in English (for instance, prepositions, articles, if-clauses, the passive). By working through these difficulties in their mother tongue, the students come to see the link between language(grammar) and usage.

Moreover, students' proficiency and the use of active or passive translation can influence the type of translation text selected. However, some scholars argue that translation as a language learning activity is more useful for advanced learners than for beginners. For instance, Lado (1964: 54) claimed that translation – a complex psychological skill – can be taught as a separate ability when L2 proficiency is achieved. On the other hand, there are some scholars who argue in favour of the use of translation in the language learning class. Vermes (2010: 87) stated that translation can be useful for foreign language teaching because it fosters communication and interaction between people. Moreover, Cook (2010: 100) claimed that translation can also allow learners “to

move back and forth” between L1 and L2. Therefore, translation competence is useful in TILT for its communicative potentials.

Although the contributions on pedagogical translation are scarce, some translation methods and approaches on translator’s training can be beneficial both for language learners and future translators.

## **2.4 The Strong Points of the English Translation Curriculum at the University of Padua**

The English translation curriculum of the University of Padua presents a wide range of didactic approaches and methods, such as *Skopos* Theory in Translation Studies, cooperative learning in language teaching, and a focus on the development of the communicative competence in both. Some of the important didactic characteristics for the development of translation competence will be briefly mentioned.

“Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers” (Albers 1971: 103). Moving from the teacher-centered approach, students are considered active participants in the learning operation. Hence, teachers are not “the repository of knowledge and truth” (Colina 2003: 52), but rather a guide, a facilitator in the learning process. In the case of the translation classes, students are not given a right version of translation proposed by the teacher but they are instead encouraged to adopt the best strategy to face the problems encountered during the translation activity. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to create the right environment for the emergence of social aspects of the translation, for the interaction between students in order to enable the development of translation competence. This student-centered approach is the reflection of the belief that learning is not a static knowledge but instead a constant active process in which knowledge and meaning are acquired on experience.

The “learning by doing” approach is only efficient when knowledge is constructed by the interaction with other participants. Moreover, interaction can stimulate student’s



autonomy since any “individual reflection is not left aside” (González Davies 2004: 36). “Knowledge is transformed or constructed by individuals who makes his or her own meanings through dialogue with other people in a linguistic community” (Kiraly 2000: 23). During the translation courses, students are expected to constantly work in small groups in order to carry out translation tasks. The creation of a positive atmosphere, through the teamwork, results in an effective learning since it is a “process of shared perspectives” (Kiraly 2000: 35). Moreover, small groups have been found to be favorable for the acquisition of cognitive abilities such as problem-solving, reasoning and justifying decisions. However, the learning process is only possible if students are aware of the meaning of being part of a team.

As the language mastery is expected to develop progressively throughout the bachelor degree, similarly translation competence needs to be developed by practice. Therefore, translation programme should take into account both the learning outcomes and students’ level. The text difficulty should be gradual and sequential. According to Hurtado (1995: 60), the four criteria for the selection of the texts are:

- linguistic interest,
- extra-linguistic interest,
- text typological interest,
- interest for an understanding of the translation process mechanisms.

Moreover, texts should be authentic and should be selected in order to represent the main genres present on the professional market. English translation courses at the University of Padua focus on different types of texts from the tourist to the advertising one in a gradual progression which reflects the level of language proficiency of the students. The selection of this type of writing source is explained in relation to students knowledge. Normally, undergraduate students are not familiar with high-specialized texts i.e legal or scientific texts. Therefore, at the early stage students should translate texts with which they have experience such as press articles, letters, tourist information and promotional texts. Progression and accessibility of the content are key factors in the development of translation skills. Students’ knowledge will increase as their life experience grows (this also includes a deepened knowledge in other subject areas such as Economics, Linguistics and Law). It should be also taken into account that student motivation is strictly

influenced by their ability to access the content of the translation texts. Over-difficult or over-simple activities discourage and demotivate learners. Moreover, the selection of the texts, the co-operative learning and the students-centered approach encourage students to acquire a considerable awareness of translation problems.

## **2. 5 Developing Translation Competence Through Genres**

The concept of genre started to be introduced around the 1970s and 1980s as a semiotic notion connected to interlingual translation. Although some studies focused their attention on the issue, the perception of translation as a textual operation is due to the development of the Textual Approach, which places emphasis on the text itself. Therefore, genre is recognized as the distinctive semantic category which enables the comprehension and the production of a text. Genre is “a conventionalised text form that has a specific function in the culture that it belongs to and which reflects a purpose that is intended by the sender and can be foreseen by the receiver” (García Izquierdo 2008: 3). Hence, it reflects the manner in which reality is conceptualized. This conceptualization is shared by all the members of a cultural community.

Nevertheless, since a genre can serve different purposes it is impossible to define clear limited categories. It can be analysed from three different perspectives:

- socio-communicative perspective, which involves the space, the relationships and the actions performed by participants;
- formal perspective, which refers to the conventional features around which readers build their expectations;
- cognitive perspective, which includes the organization, categorization, and transformation of the reality by a community.

Through the analysis of a specific genre is possible to obtain information on the situation, the relationship between participants and the goal of the communication. From

a socio-communicative perspective, genre competence can be a useful tool for the development of translation ability. In particular, it can:

- determine the status and the power hierarchy of the participants;
- indicate the goal of the communication;
- identify the situationality of the L1 and L2 texts;
- enable a deep understanding of the socio-linguistic characteristics;
- develop bilingual competence;
- promote the acquisition of thematic competence.

Moreover, it can also increase textual and discourse competence in relation to the acceptability of the texts – which refers to receivers’ attitude towards the text as a means of communication. At the same time, the identification of the text genre can be useful to analyse cultural norms, behaviours and values of the source text; this identification is essential in order to convey the same meaning in a different language and culture.

From a formal perspective, genres are perceived as “conventionalized phenomena” (García Izquierdo *et al.* 2008: 2) in which there is a tacit agreement among the members of that culture on the adequate patterns to use (i.e the use of lexical items, the modality, the degree of formality of the text, the phraseology).

All these parameters do not have the same importance in translation. The genre defines the characteristics which are relevant in a specific context. The acquisition of this type of competence can help to the acquisition and improvements of some of the translation skills such as:

- the identification of the structural characteristics of the source and target texts;
- the ability to transfer the meaning from L1 into L2 text, paying attention to lexical choices, cohesion and syntactic structure;
- the recognition of the text forms of a genre;
- the development of reformulation strategies;
- the production of adequate texts in the target language;
- the identification of textual and discursive norms of source and target text.

From a cognitive perspective, genre competence enables the automatization of the text comprehension. In relation to translation abilities, it can help to improve:

- an understanding of the implicit information conveyed by the text, according to the reader;
- an understanding of the explicit information of the genre, according to the needs of the target audience;
- the identification of the genre as a whole category with conceptual and argumentative patterns;
- the ability to differentiate the main ideas from the secondary ones;
- the recognition of the illocutionary acts of the source text and the ability to transfer them into the L2 text;
- the development of the memory and attention.

It can also consolidate other translation abilities such as the acquisition of basic knowledge of the disciplines to which the genre belongs and the comprehension of different types of texts from various subjects and fields. As pointed out above, genre competence is an important educational tool which can foster communicative competence, translation competence and other professional skills (i.e writing, correcting).

### **2.5.1 The Use of Tourist and Promotional Texts for Developing Translation Competence**

In the second- and third-year English Course at the University of Padua, students translate texts from tourist sectors: From tourist guides to advertising texts. Tourism is a ‘consumer product’ (Fodde 2006: 123). The value of the products corresponds to a representation of a social sign. Advertising is often multimodal and complex from the point of view of communication/interaction with the addressees. The multimodality of

promotional texts requires the possession of a high level of L2 proficiency, students translate this type of texts in the last year of their undergraduate course.

Tourist guides or brochures are suitable for intermediate L2 learners because the texts are not highly specialized and the subject area is accessible to them. Moreover, this type of texts allows continuity and at the same diversity (because of its variety) in the subject and enables students to focus on particular aspects of translation. The familiarity of the students with the tourist texts helps them to focus on source text analysis and on the possible solutions, depending on the translation situation. The combination of informative<sup>1</sup> and vocative<sup>2</sup> functions, and the identification of the situation are some of the reasons for using them in a translation class. The little experience needed for this subject area allows a deep understanding of the functions of a text. Moreover, although these texts are intended for non-specialized readers, their variety of topics offers the possibility to reflect on and cope with translation problems such as comprehension and terminological problems. Moreover, the accessibility and the familiarity with the subject can increase the students' confidence as the demands on the students are suited to their level of competence.

After reflecting and working on tourist guides or brochures, in their third year students are asked to translate promotional and advertising texts whose difficulty lies in their multimodal nature (the combination of images, text and music). Advertising discourse is characterized by brevity and the presence of linguistic and non-linguistic messages which are expected to evoke a variety of meanings to the readers. The metaphoric use of the language is one of the main problems that students have to cope with. The message is not only conveyed by the text but rather by the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Therefore, students have to transmit the same meaning of the original, taking into account some texture features such as puns, metaphors and the creative use of the language. Since a text exists only in relation to the community and the culture which produced it, the translation of promotional texts stimulates students' reflection on the importance of the historical time in which the text was produced in order to adjust it to the cultural identity of the public.

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<sup>1</sup> the core of the informative function is to provide facts around a topic, the reality outside of language, including reported ideas or theories.

<sup>2</sup> the core of the vocative function is the addressee. The readership is called upon to act, think or feel in the way intended by the text.

The use of tourist and promotional texts in the translation class can help students to analyse different translation situations in which the cultural gap between the readers of the source and target text is emphasized. The awareness of the differences enable students to develop adequate translation strategies and consequently the reflection on the different linguistic and textual characteristics of L1 and L2 allow them to develop L2 proficiency.

# CHAPTER 3

## 3.1 Theoretical Framework

The aim of my research is to measure the acquisition of translation competence in second- and third-year students of the undergraduate course *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* at the University of Padua. The theoretical foundation of the present study lies in the so-called product-oriented approach to translation training. Students' performance is measured by the analysis of their written translation from English into Italian throughout the second and third year at university.

The concept of translation quality assessment is strictly connected to the one of translation competence. For the purpose of this research, the definition of TC is based on the PACTE group's research work. Although their model is designed for translators training, it is considered to be the most appropriated for several reasons:

- it is the longest longitudinal study on translation competence conducted so far, indeed their research work started in 1997;
- the model has been tested empirically and it has undergone different revisions. The first model, presented in 1998, was improved in 2000 on the basis of the exploratory studies and pilot tests carried out prior to the experiments. This characteristics lacks in almost all the models proposed by scholars;
- the definition of TC by the PACTE is open-ended and it is centered on the translation itself rather than on other competences required by professional markets. Therefore, it does not include all the sub-components of TC, criticized by Pym (2003), that are not strictly related to the translation process.

## 3.2 The Pacte's Holistic Model

PACTE (*Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación*) is a research group of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) which focused its investigation on the definition, acquisition and assessment of TC. Since 1997, its empirical studies have examined the acquisition and the evolution of TC, as well as the evaluation of translation texts on the basis of the 'acceptability' index. The investigation involves the analysis of the translation of 35 professional translators and 130 translation students. It comprises direct and inverse translation in six language combinations: German, French and English, and Catalan and Spanish. The aim of their study is to improve the research about translation teaching in order to design a proper curriculum in translator training education. Their holistic model, which analyses both the translation process and product, is the first empirical pioneer research within Translation Studies. The several data gathering methods and different types of data used permitted the analysis of the same phenomena from different perspectives. These methods include:

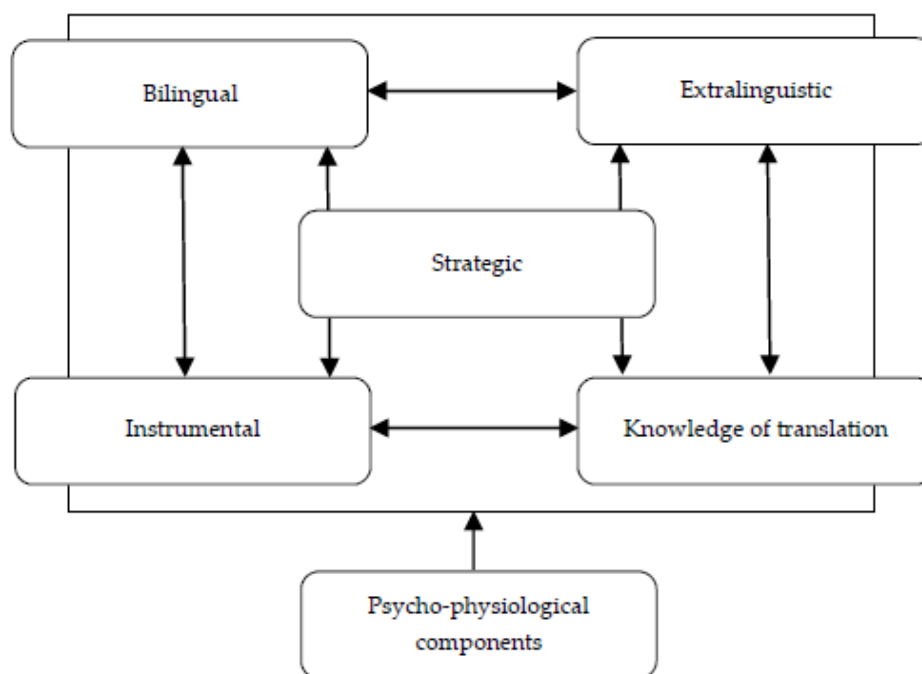
- the source and the target texts;
- questionnaires on the knowledge about translation process and translation problems;
- retrospective interviews;
- direct observation;
- use of software PROXY to record translation protocols;
- use of the software Camtasia to record screen-activity (PACTE 2005: 575-576).

According to PACTE, translation competence is "the underlying system of knowledge required to translate" (PACTE 2011: 33). It has four characteristics:

- an expert knowledge, which does not correspond to bilingual and communicative competence;
- it involves procedural more than declarative knowledge. Moreover, the capacity to use the first is the discriminating factor which differentiates skilled from unskilled translators;



- it is formed by interrelated sub-competences of different levels;
- it includes strategic knowledge which is fundamental to TC since it controls the whole process.



**Figure 6: PACTE's model of translation competence (Source:Pacte 2003 : 60)**

The model of translation competence proposed by the PACTE Group (2003: 60) is formed by five sub-competences:

- bilingual sub-competence is “predominantly procedural knowledge required to communicate in two languages. It comprises pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge”(PACTE 2011: 33-34);
- the extra-linguistic sub-competence is “predominantly declarative knowledge. It comprises general world knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, and bicultural and encyclopaedic knowledge”(PACTE 2011: 33-34);
- the knowledge of translation sub-competence is “predominantly declarative knowledge about translation and aspects of the profession. It comprises knowledge about how translation functions and knowledge about professional translation practice”(PACTE 2011: 33-34);

- the instrumental sub-competence is “predominantly procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation resources and information and communication technologies applied to translation (dictionaries of all kinds, encyclopaedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic corpora, search engines, etc.)” (PACTE 2011: 33-34);
- the strategic sub-competence is “procedural knowledge to guarantee the efficiency of the translation process and solve problems encountered.[...] Its function is to plan the process and carry out the translation project (selecting the most appropriate method); evaluate the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose; activate the different sub-competences and compensate for any shortcomings; identify translation problems and apply procedures to solve them” (PACTE 2011: 33-34);
- the psycho-physiological components which comprises “ memory, perception, attention and emotion; attitudinal aspects such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, the ability to think critically, etc.; abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis, etc”(PACTE 2011: 33-34).

According to this holistic model, strategic competence is at the heart of TC since it comprises the ability to make decisions and solve problems. It interacts with the other sub-competences in a system of hierarchical relations. Moreover, since bilingual and extra-linguistic knowledge are also possessed by bilinguals, the competences which are believed to be specific to TC are: strategic, instrumental and knowledge of translation.

However, for the purpose of my research this model should be adapted to the sample since my analysis only focuses on translation product and it does not involve language teachers or professionals, but rather language students. Therefore, the sample is formed by students who might or not become professional translators. Hence, the translation activities from English to Italian should be considered in a wider approach since translation is only a part of the language learning process. Moreover, my investigation is centered on individual and group work since it does not test experts as

the PACTE's research does. Only four sub-competence were taken into account: bilingual, knowledge of translation, instrumental and strategic.

As pointed out before, one of the most important features of TC is the ability to identify and solve translation problems. For this reason, the quality of the translations made by students was assessed through a number of what the PACTE group refers to as Rich Points, which are translation problems present in the source text and that need to be solved applying the most adequate strategy. The idea of selecting only some parts of the texts is determined by the principle of scientific economy and the possibility to collect and analyse data more easily.

### **3.3 The research questions**

Since the aim of my research is to measure the development of translation competence, the analysis of translation performance in active translation allows the exploration of the problems and difficulties encountered by students during their bachelor degree and it can be used to improve language teaching curriculum in those areas which result more problematic for language students.

In order to fulfil the above objectives my investigation was guided by five questions:

1. Have the students improved in EN>IT translation during their undergraduate course?
2. Did practice and exposure to translation activity develop their translation competence throughout second and third year at university?
3. Which categories needed to be improved at the beginning of the second year and which areas did not present particular translation problems?
4. In which categories did students obtain the most successful outcomes?
5. Did students achieve the objectives of their active translation courses? Are they able to translate tourist and promotional texts according to the functions and the genre required in the translation brief?

### 3.3.1 Research variables

For this study, two dependent variables have been selected. The aim is to measure a possibly tangible improvement in the knowledge of the foreign language and in translation competence. The dependent variables are evaluated on the basis of the results provided by the selected indicators.

The table below illustrates the relevant information related to the dependent variables determined: conceptual definition, sub-competence referred to them, indicators and data collection instruments:

<b>V1: QUALITY OF THE TRANSLATION PRODUCT</b>	
CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	The evaluation of the students' performance in their active translation exams at the end of the academic year
SUB-COMPETENCES	Bilingual, knowledge of translation, instrumental, strategic
INDICATORS	English to Italian translation mark of second- and third-year courses
INSTRUMENTS	Written translation exams
<b>V2: ACCEPTABILITY OF RICH POINTS IN EN&gt;IT TRANSLATION</b>	
CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	The ability of students to find an adequate solution for any Rich Point selected in the source text
SUB-COMPETENCES	Bilingual, strategic
INDICATORS	Acceptability of the Rich Points
INSTRUMENTS	Written translation exams

**Table 1: Description of the variables and indicators of the investigation**

Variable 1 (V1) indicates the degree of awareness reached by students in dealing with translation; it affects the overall performance at the end of their academic years. Variable 2 (V2) allows the exploration of the improvements in L2 on the basis of the 'acceptability' index. It also shows in which category or macro-area students succeeded and which needs to be improved.

### **3.4 The Evaluation of the Translation Product through Rich Points**

Translation quality assessment is one of the thorny problems in Translation Studies. It has been discussed and evaluated from many perspectives. The concept of translation is a relevant issue for the development of suitable criteria of evaluation. Therefore, its definition has been affected by a process- and product-oriented approach to translation. Moreover, translation quality can be qualitative or quantitative: it can be used to determine the areas that need to be improved; it can measure progress and give feedback during courses; or it can measure the outcomes of the learning process (Williams 2009: 4).

In this investigation, translation quality is assessed through the notion of ‘acceptability’ of some Rich Points selected in the source texts. According to PACTE, the benefits of this method are manifold:

- it is possible to collect data on the main translation problems;
- a Rich Point can be analysed from several perspectives since the results can be obtained from different indicators;
- the triangulation data gathering method is facilitated;
- the analysis of the Rich Points can be used for both direct and inverse translation and with any linguistic combination;
- it facilitates data collection according to the scientific principle of economy (Castillo Rincón 2010: 97).

The method adopted by PACTE seemed to be the most appropriate for my investigation since it meets two fundamental requirements: validity and reliability. The first refers to “the extent to which an evaluation measures what it is designed to measure, such as translation skills”. The latter refers to “the extent to which an evaluation produces the same results when administered repeatedly to the same population under the same conditions” (Williams 2009: 5).

As pointed out by PACTE, the identification of these selected parts of the source text should provide a wide range of translation problems studied; an acceptable solution should not be immediate; and they should be homogenous in all the languages so that they can be compared. However, for the purpose of the study only the first two characteristics will be considered.

Rich Points have been selected and grouped into four macro-categories:

1. cultural and pragmatic problems which comprises cultural references, register and the functions of the text according to the reader and the genre type;
2. lexical and semantic problems which includes terminological problems, collocations and polysemous words;
3. syntactic problems which involve word order, pre-modifications, cohesion and nominalization vs. verbalization, punctuation;
4. figurative language problems refer to metaphors and figurative use of the language.

For each macro-area two Rich Points have been chosen to be representative of that category, according to the characteristic of each source text.

The selection of these four translation problem areas have been influenced by several factors: my personal experience as student of the bachelor degree in *Mediazione Linguistica e culturale* in relation to the most challenging translation problems encountered during the translation operation; the results of several studies conducted about the most frequent problems in translation; the problems and the characteristics of the texts which were discussed and studied during the EN>IT translation courses by the sample students. Moreover, although figurative language is understood only through the understanding of cultural and pragmatic contexts, it has been grouped into a different category from the pragmatic and cultural one; it has been analysed consistently during translation classes as the proper use of figurative language was one of the learning outcomes of the courses.

### 3.5 The Sample

This research is designed to answer to the five questions illustrated in the previous section. In order to measure translation competence during the undergraduate course of *Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale* at the University of Padua, the sample was constituted by second-year students – who were also assessed in their third year – who attended and participated in the translation tasks throughout the whole EN>IT translation course. However, the sample was restricted to a number of 21 students for several reasons. First of all, the research could not cover the whole class for questions of time and space. Second of all, it was quite difficult to find students who participated in all the activities which have been evaluated in this study since some of them took the final exams without attending the course and other did not even sit the final exams in the third year – this includes the students who participated in the Erasmus program. Moreover, the choice of the students' sample was also influenced by another aspect. Only students whose marks in passive translation, at the end of the second year, was 25 or above were taken into consideration. The reason for this limitation lies in the belief that the result of performance in the written translations is influenced by the proficiency and the level of knowledge of L2. Students who scored less than 25 are not expected to achieve substantial improvements in translation competence since the level may be affected by a lack of motivation or a lack of an adequate knowledge about the foreign language system. Therefore, their insufficient level did not meet the requirements for this investigation since the research questions could not be answered efficiently.

The texts which have been translated by the sample belong to tourist and promotional fields and they have been graded by the principle of growing difficulty. Therefore, in the second year students had translated texts as tourist brochures and guides which present relatively easy problems to solve, while during the third year they translated promotional texts whose difficulty lies in their multimodal nature and the problematic translation strategy that needs to be adopted to fulfil the function of the texts. To carry out the initial tasks – both in the second- and third-year courses – students had the possibility to use any type of instrumental resource such as bilingual and monolingual dictionary, parallel texts, background research on the topic. The acquisition of awareness of the text type and functions during the continuous

assessments enabled students to take their final exams with the adequately sufficient knowledge to detect and solve translation problems using the most suitable strategies. Moreover, in their third-year final exams students are provided with translation briefs in order to take into account the translation situation efficiently.

Each student has been assessed four times during their bachelor degree: at the beginning and the end of the second and at the beginning and at the end of the third year. However, the initial translation tasks – at the beginning of each year – were expected to be performed into small groups so that students could benefit from cooperation and develop a deep understanding and comprehension of the translation problems and strategies needed to effectively communicate the meaning of the source text into the target text.

In order to have an objective measurement of the level of the competence achieved in English to Italian translation, the students' performance was assessed considering their whole academic training in active translation. The first translation assignment and the final exam in both the second and third year have been compared and evaluated with the aim of analysing their gradual progress and their deficiencies in solving the translation problems selected and investigated in this study.

### **3.6 Methodology**

The Rich Points selected in each text have been evaluated on the basis of the 'acceptability' index which refers to the quality of the translation product.

According to PACTE, it is assessed in relation to different criteria:

- the meaning of the source text is communicated effectively;
- the target text meets the readers' expectations, the genre norms and the adherence to the translation brief;
- the use of language is appropriate (PACTE 2011: 41).



These criteria have been used to determine acceptable, semi-acceptable and not acceptable solutions:

- acceptable solution (A). “The solution activates all the relevant connotations of the ST in the context of the translation related to the meaning of the ST, function of the translation and language use”(PACTE 2008: 21);
- semi-acceptable solution (SA). “The solution activates some of the relevant connotations of the ST and maintains the coherence of the TT in the context of the translation related to the meaning of the ST, function of the translation and language use”(PACTE 2008: 21);
- non-acceptable solution (NA). “The solution activates none of the relevant connotations of the ST or introduces connotations that are incoherent in the context of the translation related to the meaning of the ST, function of the translation and/or language use” (PACTE 2008: 21).

For each RP an overall acceptability score was assigned: 3 for acceptable solutions, 2 for semi-acceptable solutions and 1 for unacceptable solutions. This method allowed to compare easily the level of translation competence achieved by the sample in the second and third year EN>IT translation.

Moreover, the students’ performance was calculated according to two statistical indexes: mean and variance. In order to transform data into comprehensible information, the elaboration of data need to be analysed in relation to the values obtained.

The mean of the ‘acceptability’ index was compared to the variance value of the population in order to have a general idea of the trend of acceptability of the solutions proposed by students and consequently of the level of translation competence of my research’s population in the four categories selected.

The arithmetic mean determines the general trend of the result obtained with the acceptability index. In mathematics, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) refers to a central value of a set of numbers and it is calculated by the sum of the values divided by the numbers of the values:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum_i X_i}{n}$$

where  $\sum_i X_i$  is the sum of all the population observations,  $N$  is the number of population observations.

Variance ( $\sigma^2$ ) analyses the variability of a given phenomenon. It corresponds to the expectation of the squared division of a variable from its mean and it measures how far a set of values are spread out from their mean.

$$\sigma^2 = \frac{\sum (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{n}$$

where  $\sigma^2$  is the population variance,  $\bar{X}$  is the population mean,  $X_i$  is the  $i$ th element from the population, and  $N$  is the number of elements in the population.

Therefore, variance highlights the discrepancy among the values obtained: the higher the value of variance, the more different the values will be from each other; the closer variance will be to zero, the more the results obtained will be homogenous. For the purpose of my research, the measurement of the distance from the mean value allowed me to observe if there were significant differences among the students' performance in the English to Italian translation tests. However, since the number of students who translate a text was quite variable, only in the texts which were translated by 7 students or more the variance index was calculated. Moreover, these two indexes have been compared to the other dependent variable selected in the study: these results have been contrasted with the marks of the second- and third-year final exams.

### 3.7 Analysis of the initial translation activity in the second year

As first task of the course *Lingua e traduzione 2*, students translated – first individually and then in groups – a text from *The Observer*, a British newspaper published on Sundays. Therefore, the text was written for a general audience with the aim of encouraging people to visit the British city of Manchester.

#### Manchester

##### Why go?

They say **good things come in threes** (RP4a) and that's certainly true for Manchester this year: the city will celebrate the opening of two major new cultural spaces, followed this summer by the return of the Manchester International Festival. There's also a trio of eclectic places to stay, from a classy townhouse to football fan nirvana. No wonder the *New York Times* has flagged Manchester as one of its top places to visit for 2015.

##### What to do

First up is the unveiling of the **revamped** (RP3a) Whitworth Art Gallery in February, with its new art garden, **landscape gallery** (RP2a) and 10 exhibitions. In April, Cornerhouse and the Library Theatre Company take up residence at *Home*, a £25m complex comprising art galleries, two theatres and five cinema screen. Add to this a programme of talks and workshops at the renovated Central Library and Mancunians won't be short of a **culture fix** (RP2b) dose.

##### Where to stay

Gary Neville and Ryan Giggs open their Hotel Football in March, with rooms overlooking Old Trafford and a **rooftop five-a-side pitch** (RP3b) The Hotel Gotham follows in April, with Art Deco styling, **Prohibition-style bar** (RP1a) and members' club. Summer sees the launch of the King Street Townhouse, an intimate boutique hotel.

##### Where to eat

The quality of food on Rusholme's Wilmslow Road (aka Curry Mile) is **hit and miss** (RP1b) but the Mughli is **a gem** (RP4b), with a menu inspired by the street food of Mumbai and Lahore (08724 379 503).

##### Insider tip

Polly Checkland Harding of [creativetourist.com](http://creativetourist.com) suggests a visit to Elizabeth Gaskell's home: "You can sit at the desk where novels such as *Cranford* and *North and South* were penned. It's almost as though the lady of the house were about to come back through the front door."

Figure 7: Initial translation activity of the second year.

### 3.7.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students <sup>3</sup>	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Gso	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	2
Mbe	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	2
Eca	1	1	3	2	1	3	2	2
Oco	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
Aan	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Ebo	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	2
Lgr	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1
Lzo	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2
Ssc	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2
Lda	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	3
Fca	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Cae	3	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
Cpo	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	2
Sde	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2
Afi	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	2
Jci	3	1	2	2	1	3	2	2
Vda	3	1	2	2	1	3	2	2
Mba	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Mbi	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Cco	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Mfr	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>MEAN</b>	1.33	1.00	1.76	1.90	1.19	2.14	1.76	1.66

**Table 2: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year.**

Although this text did not present enormous difficulties, the presence of low values was an expected result since it was the first text that students translated from English into Italian.

Each macro-category of translation problems was represented by two Rich Points, which referred to different types of language characteristics within the same area. As

<sup>3</sup> Every student was assigned a code consisting of the first letter of their name and the first two letters of their surname.

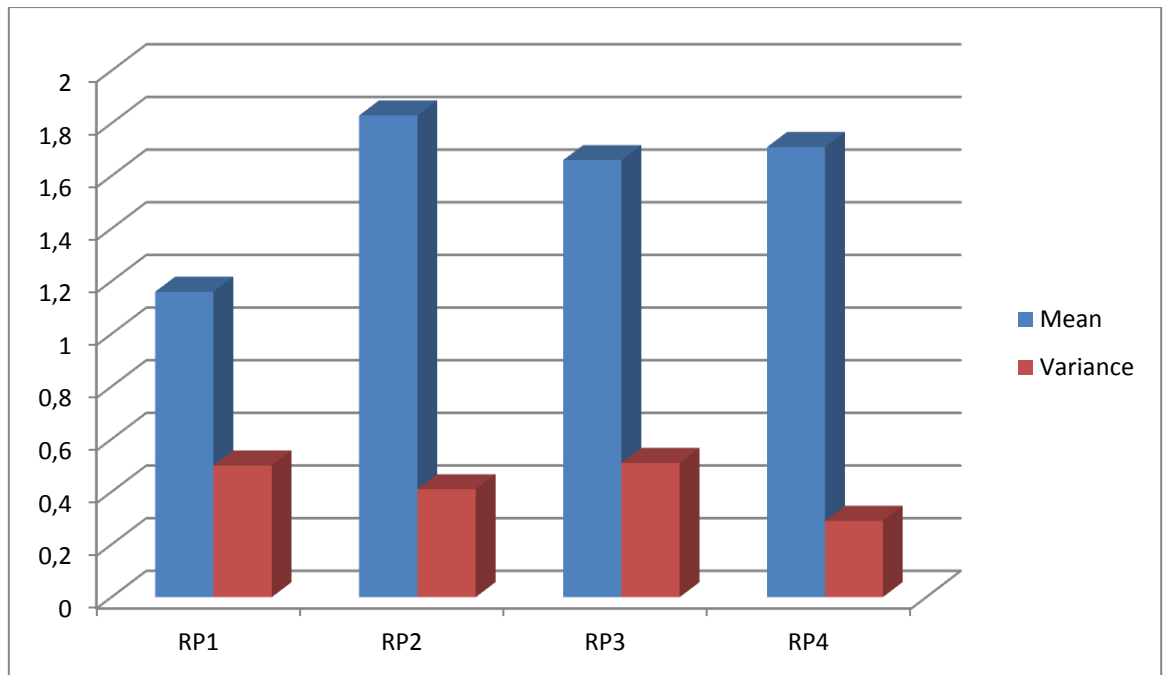
shown in the table above, the results of the index of acceptability are heterogeneous and their mean does not go up to 2. In particular,

- RP1 (a,b) refers to linguistic and pragmatic problems. RPa represented a clear historical reference to the Prohibition Era which could not be kept and understood by an Italian audience. Although some acceptable solutions were provided i.e. *bar anni '20*, most of the students struggled to find the adequate term as it is possible to observe by the huge numbers of unacceptable solutions i.e. *un bar in stile Prohibition*, *un bar in stile Proibizionismo*. Moreover, in some target texts this reference was completely eliminated. Rp1b refers to the correct use of the language in context. The meaning of the term did not create any semantic problem, however, almost the totality of the statistical population translated it as *imprevedibile*, *un azzardo*, *inconstante*. These solutions were considered unacceptable because the use of negative words is not pragmatically advisable in an Italian tourist text.
- RP2 (a, b) involves lexical and terminological problems. In RP2a the term 'landscape' could not be translated as an adjective of the noun 'gallery' since it would be incorrect in Italian. It only generated one acceptable solution i.e. *una galleria dedicata ai paesaggi*; some semi-acceptable solutions were provided by students such as *galleria di paesaggi*. However, most of the translations were considered unacceptable i.e. *galleria panoramica*, *galleria paesaggistica*. In RP2b the expression "culture fix" needed some re-adaptation according to the context. Most of the solutions were assessed as acceptable or semi-acceptable i.e. *una buona dose di cultura*, *il pieno di cultura*. Translations such as *centro culturale*, *contenuti culturali* or omissions were considered as unacceptable solutions.
- RP3 (a, b) refers to the syntactic problem category. RP3a requires a different position in the target text since the English pre-modification becomes a post-modification in Italian and it should be included as an aside. Only two students provided acceptable solutions i.e. *dopo essere stata rimodernata*. The other solutions were considered unacceptable such as *rinnovata (Whitworth Art Gallery)*, *nuova (Whitworth Art Gallery)*, *moderna (Whitworth Art Gallery)*. RP3b involves a word order problem. From the result of the acceptability index, it did not seem particularly challenging. Many students' solutions were considered acceptable i.e. *un campo da calcio a 5 sul tetto* or semi-acceptable such as *un*

*campo da calcio sul tetto dell'hotel*. However, few students' translation choices were assessed as unacceptable, i.e. *tetto a cinque spioventi*.

- RP4 (a, b) refers to the use of figurative language. In RP4a, the idiom “good things come in threes” needs to be readapted in Italian because an idiom with the number three – with the same meaning – does not exist. However, to maintain the cohesion of the text the reference to the number should be kept because it is a recurrent theme in the paragraph (“There is a trio of”). The solution which has been assessed as acceptable was *si dice che tre sia il numero perfetto*. Among the semi-acceptable solutions *non c'è due senza tre* was the most common. Despite the fact that this Italian idiom can have a negative connotation, it has been considered as a semi-acceptable choice because the use of the symbolic value of the number three was maintained. Unacceptable solutions include bad translations such as *dicono che stiano per accadere grandi cose* and the literal translation of the idiom *si dice che le buone notizie arrivino sempre in tre*.

In order to obtain some clear information about the trend of the ‘acceptability index’, the mean of the Rich Points of the same category have been grouped. Therefore, the mean of the Rich Points are: 1.16 for RP1, 1.83 for RP2, 1.66 for RP3 and 1.71 for RP4. The variance of each RP is respectively 0.50, 0.41, 0.51 and 0.29.



**Figure 8: Mean and variance values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year.**

As shown in the chart above, students' initial competence is quite homogenous. In particular, students obtained the highest score in lexis and semantics, and they performed quite well in the figurative language category. However, the variance index shows that the most homogenous level of competence was reached in the use of figurative speech. Syntax was particularly challenging for students. Nevertheless, within this area the students' competence was homogenous as shown by the variance index (more than 0,5). The macro-category in which students obtain the worst results was the pragmatic and the cultural one. However, the variance index shows that some significant differences existed between the levels of competence.

### **3.8 Analysis of the second-year final exams**

At the end of the second year, students were required to translate some tourist texts from the *Lonely Planet* guide and from *The Guardian* travel section. Hence, the texts were written for potential tourists of that specific place. Since my sample took the exam in

different dates, the analysis of their level competence was measured by different texts within the same level of difficulty.

### 3.8.1 Introducing the Middle East

#### Introducing the Middle East

The Middle East is one of history's **grand epics** (RP4a) - a cradle of civilisations and a beautiful, complicated land that's home to some of the most hospitable people on the planet. Its **ancient- modern** (RP3a) metropolises are full of the stunning architecture that distinguishes the three great monotheistic faiths. There **they sit** (RP4b) alongside the more secular bazaars and **coffee shops** (RP1a) that seem to embody all the mystery of a land that gave us *Thousand and One Nights*.

Beyond city limits, the Middle East is a land of mighty rivers (the Nile, Euphrates), even mightier deserts (the Sahara and peerless Wadi Rumi) and green landscapes of exceptional beauty. **Exploring these wilderness areas** - from snow-capped summits in Turkey to the kaleidoscopic waters of the Red Sea - **lies** (RP3b) at the heart of the **region** (RP2a)'s appeal. The message is simple: forget the clichés - a visit here is one of the most varied and **soulful travel experiences** (RP1b) on earth.

At some point, you'll be sitting in a coffeehouse or looking lost in a labyrinth of narrow lanes when someone will strike up a conversation and, within minutes, invite you home to meet their family **and share a meal** (RP2b). Or someone will simply approach and say with unmistakable warmth, 'Welcome'. These spontaneous and utterly genuine words can occur anywhere and suddenly (and forever) change the way you see the Middle East.

Figure 9: Second-year final translation activity "Introducing the Middle East".

#### 3.8.1.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Aan	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	1
Ebo	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	1
Lgr	2	3	1	2	3	2	1	1
Lzo	1	3	1	2	3	3	2	3
Ssc	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Lda	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	2



Fca	3	3	1	2	2	3	2	3
Cae	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2
Mba	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1
Cco	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	2
<b>MEAN</b>	2.1	2.3	1.2	2	2.3	2.3	2	1.8

**Table 3: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in the translation activity "Introducing the Middle East".**

This text presented some difficult points which students have to solve, adopting the best translation strategy suitable to the situation. As showed by the table above, students dealt quite well with the problems selected through the Rich Points. Only two RP had a mean value lower than 2. In particular:

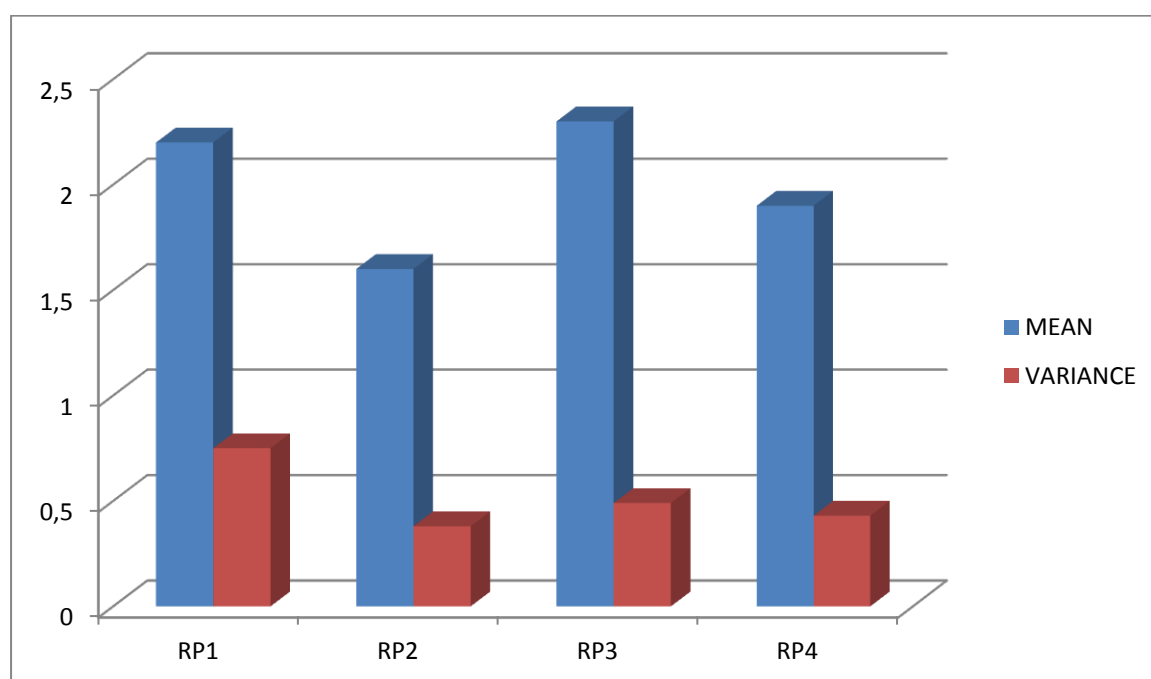
- RP1 (a, b) refers to the cultural and pragmatic category. RP1a "coffee shops" could not be kept in Italian since the literal translation would not convey the same meaning and situation of the source text. However, some students' solutions were assessed as acceptable i.e. *caffè*, *bar*, a huge number of choices were considered semi-acceptable i.e. *recenti caffè*, *locali* or unacceptable such as *coffeshop*, *negozi di caffè*. Instead, Rp1b, "soulful travel experience", did not pose any terminological problems but it had to be adapted to the context. In general, the solutions provided by the students were assessed as acceptable as they were adapted to the tourist language, for instance: *esperienze appassionanti*, *esperienze emozionanti*. Only one choice was considered semi-acceptable: *esperienza di viaggio totalizzante*. Few students proposed unacceptable solutions i.e. *appassionata esperienza di viaggio*, *viaggi ricchi di colori*, *esperienze aricchenti*.
- RP2 (a, b) involves some lexical problems. RP2a, 'region', was almost assessed as unacceptable since students translated it as *regione*. It was probably due to the interference of the Italian term which does not have an exact correspondence with the English one. Only one translation choice was considered acceptable i.e. *terra*. Rp2b was a problem of collocation. In Italian "share a meal" is used when people share the same dish and it does not exactly convey the meaning of eating together at the same table as does in English, therefore *condividere un pasto* was considered as semi-acceptable. However, some acceptable solutions have been proposed such as *mangiare insieme*, *invitare a cena*.

- RP3 (a, b) needs some syntactic changes in order to have a translation which sounds natural to an Italian reader. RP3a could not be translated literally as *antico-moderne* because it would not be correct, in fact this type of solutions were assessed as unacceptable as well as *le sue antiche città sono diventate moderne metropoli*. However, many acceptable solutions were provided as *antiche e moderne allo stesso tempo, binomio di antico e moderno*. RP3b required a modification of the order of the elements in the sentence. Only one student used an unacceptable sentence: *l'esplorazione di tali riserve si stende fino al punto più affascinante della regione*. Among the semi-acceptable solutions: *l'esplorare queste terre è al centro del fascino della regione, l'esplorazione di questi luoghi incontaminati è la principale forza attrattiva della regione*. Some choices were assessed as acceptable such as *Andando alla scoperta di questi luoghi si coglie il fascino della regione, la maggior forza attrattiva della regione consiste proprio nell'esplorare queste zone selvagge*.
- RP4 (a, b), referring to the figurative use of the language, presented some problems. Although RP4a is a cultural reference, the meaning of the sentence did not create any difficulty as this encyclopaedic knowledge is shared among educated people. The problem was rather how to transfer this figurative use of the language into Italian. Most students provided semi-acceptable solutions such as [...] *culla delle vicende epiche della storia, grandiose epopee della storia, un passato grandioso*. Only two acceptable choices were found: *uno dei luoghi più leggendaria della storia, una delle pietre miliari della storia*. Instead, *luoghi epici della storia* and *uno dei paesi più antichi della storia* were considered as unacceptable. As shown by the 'acceptability' index, RP4b caused some difficulties which resulted in unacceptable translations i.e. *qui ci si siede di fianco, stanno uno di fianco all'altro*. However, most students provided semi-acceptable solutions such as *che si accompagnano ai [...], questi sono accompagnati*. Only one translation choice was considered as acceptable i.e. *si trovano accanto*.

The mean of the Rich Points *a* and *b* have been grouped and then compared to the value of the variance.

RICH POINTS	MEAN	VARIANCE
RP1	2.2	0.75
RP2	1.6	0.38
RP3	2.3	0.49
RP4	1.9	0.43

**Table 4: Variance and mean values of students' performance in the translation activity "Introducing the Middle East".**



**Figure 10: Mean and variance values of students' performance in the Middle East translation activity.**

As can be seen from the table above, students performed well in the syntactic macro-area and the acceptability achieved in translation is quite homogenous since it is about 0.5. The second category in which students obtained good results was the cultural and pragmatic one. However, the variance number shows that the level of competence reached by students was not uniform. In the lexical and semantic category the level of competence achieved is quite low but it is more homogenous. Therefore, most of the students did not achieve a high level of translation competence in that category. In the use

of figurative language, as showed in the table, students' competence is quite heterogeneous and the level reached is standard.

### 3.8.2 Going to Greece: a guide to the country and its islands

**Going to Greece: a guide to the country and its islands**

Mykonos, Santorini and Ios form the **tourist heart** (RP2a) of the islands, each fulfilling the **Greek island dream** (RP3a) with their own unique **selling points** (RP4a). **Some reports have suggested these first two islands will always be busy, so head beyond these** (there are 56 in the group), and even beyond **Naxos, Paros and Milos** (RP1a) – three lovely but popular islands – and **choose somewhere less well-known** (RP3b). Folegandros, to the south, once remote behind its tall cliffs, is becoming increasingly trendy.

The northern Cyclades are within easy reach of Athens and normally get plenty of Greek tourists. Kea, with its oak forest, and Kythnos, with its **hot springs** (RP2b), are both quiet. Andros is one of the largest Cyclades, with a varied, rugged landscape. Meanwhile, peaceful Serifos, Tinos with its pilgrimage site, remote Anafi, all have something special to offer.

The north-east Aegean includes a hotch-potch of islands stretching from verdant Samos in the south, just off the coast of Turkey, up to Thasos 400km to the north, which is closer to Bulgaria than it is to Athens. Heading west, Ikaria is a different **kettle of fish** (RP4b), **not immediately pretty** (RP1b) but the locals have an independent and proud streak that sets them apart. Finally, Lesbos is one of the biggest of all the islands, and proper exploration will reveal why it is still beloved by artists and historians.

**Figure 11: Second-year final translation activity “Going to Greece: a guide to the country and its islands”.**

#### 3.8.2.2 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Gso	1	3	3	1	3	3	3	1

**Table 5: Acceptability of the Rich Points of the second-year final translation activity “Going to Greece : a guide to the country and its islands”.**

This text was translated only by one student and the Rich Points did not seem to be particularly challenging. Only three RP obtained an acceptability index of 1, while in the others the highest score was reached. If we analyse them in detail:

- RP1 (a, b) needed some re-adaptations conforming to the text. RP1a refers to geographic references. Students were expected to translate the name of the islands which had an equivalent in Italian. The student obtained a value of 1 because she kept the English names in the Italian translation. However, this could be influenced by a lack of encyclopaedic knowledge, so the student did not translate the names of the islands as *Nasso, Paro e Milos* because she did not know if these islands had an Italian translation. RP1b could not be translated literally as it would not pragmatically correct. The choice *non si farà apprezzare subito* was assessed as acceptable because the negative connotation was eliminated.
- RP2 (a, b) presented some lexical and semantic problem. In RP2a *un cuore turistico* was not an acceptable solution since it is not a collocation in Italian. The solution proposed by the student was evaluated as acceptable *cuore pulsante* since it activates all the relevant connotations of the source text. RP2b caused some semantic problem because of the polysemy of the word ‘spring’ which can either refer to the season or to the outflow of ground water. In this case, the translation *caldi giorni primaverili* was completely unacceptable; an acceptable solution would be *sorgenti termali*.
- RP3 (a, b) required some syntactical modifications. RP3a included a pre-modification which becomes a post-modification in Italian. The solution provided by the student was considered as acceptable i.e. *immaginario collettivo del luogo*. RP3b needed some change in the word order of the sentence. Moreover, as proposed by the student, the sentence could be spelt into two and the imperative was transformed into an interrogative (Italian tourist texts tend to be more impersonal and they usually not address directly to the reader, so in this case the impartive form should be changed) i.e. *ma come sottolineato da alcuni reportage,*

*queste isole saranno sempre molto affollate. Allora perchè non spingersi oltre[...]perfino oltre[...], e optare per qualcosa di più intimo?* However, *intimo* was not a good translation of the term less-known, the acceptability index was assessed as 3 because only the syntactic modification was evaluated.

- RP4 (a, b) involve the use of figurative language. RP4a “selling points” was evaluated as acceptable since it conveys the meaning of the source text, and the use of the language is appropriated. The student translated it as *pregi*. RP4b is an idiom. However, the student understood the figurative meaning of the term, the solution provided *un altro paio di maniche* was assessed as unacceptable because it was not adequate to the register and the pragmatic features of the source text.

Since this text was translated only by a student, the mean and the variance will not be calculated since they will not be supported by scientific evidence. In general, the student performed quite well and the acceptability index reached even its peak in the syntactic category.

### 3.8.3 Introducing The Antarctic

**Introducing The Antarctic**

No place on earth compares to this vast wilderness. Antarctica is simply stunning. The enormity of its **ice shelves** (RP1a) and mountain ranges invariably **heightens feelings** (RP4a) of humanity’s insignificance and nature’s grandeur. Antarctica’s **peculiar beauty** (RP2a) **may haunt you** (RP1b) for the rest of your days.

**Because the continent has never had a native population** – even today, scientists and other staff members at research stations are only temporary residents – **Antarctic wildlife is still unafraid of people** (RP3a). Well-behaved visitors usually elicit no more than disinterested yawns from seals and penguins focused on rearing their young and evading predators. The human reaction is exactly opposite: almost all visitors to Antarctica find that their experiences here exceed their expectations. Everyone – scientist, support worker, government official and tourist alike – who comes here must **‘earn’ Antarctica**, (RP4b) either by making an **often-difficult voyage** (RP3b) or a costly flight.

Antarctica’s most pressing issue is its environment and how best protect it. The major impacts on the Antarctic environment are caused by people who have never even visited it. Climate change and **ozone depletion** (RP2b) are prime examples of the way human activity elsewhere affects Antarctica. But studies have also found that lead particles from gasoline combustion are blown to Antarctica as soon as one month after they leave exhaust pipes in South America, Australia and New Zealand.

**Figure 12: Second-year final translation activity “Introducing The Antarctic”.**

#### 3.8.3.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Mbe	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3
Oco	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	3
Eca	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	3
<b>MEAN</b>	2	1.66	2.66	1.66	1.66	2	2.66	3

**Table 6: Acceptability index and mean values of students’ performance in the second-year final translation activity “Introducing The Antarctic”.**

As shown by the results of the acceptability index, this text did not present particular difficulties in the population of my study. The mean value was quite high; students seemed to have more translation problems in RP1b, RP2b and RP3a. In general, the RP were representative of several problems:

- RP1 (a, b) pose some pragmatic and cultural difficulties. RP1a “ice shelves” was not a semantic or lexical problem, but it was rather related to the extra-linguistic knowledge. One solution was assessed as unacceptable *sporgenze ghiacciate* since it does not convey the meaning of the source text in terms of appropriate use of the language. The translation choices *banchise* and *ghiacciai* were considered respectively acceptable and semi-acceptable. In RP1b the literal translation of the verb “to haunt” would not be pragmatically correct in the Italian text since negative connotations should be avoided. Only one solution was considered as acceptable: *non abbandonerà più i vostri ricordi*. The other two choices were evaluated as unacceptable i.e. *vi ossessionerà*.
- RP2 (a, b) involves lexical and collocation problems. RP2a required two re-adaptations: students have to find the equivalent collocation in Italian with the same meaning and slightly negative connotation. However, one solution was considered as semi-acceptable *bellezza insolita*, the other students proposed the same solution *bellezza singolare* which was assessed as acceptable. RP2b required some finer research about ecological issues. Only one solution was considered as acceptable *la riduzione dello strato di ozono*, while the remaining solutions were evaluated as unacceptable: *il buco dell’ozono*, *l’esaurimento dell’ozono*.
- RP3 (a, b) required some syntactical modifications. In RP3a the word order could not be kept in Italian for two reasons: the subordinate clause usually comes after the independent clause, the dashes do not follow the same rules in L1 and L2. None of the statistical population proposed an acceptable solution. One translation choice was assessed as unacceptable *questo continente non ha mai avuto una popolazione autoctona, tanto che perfino oggi li scienziati e gli altri membri dello staff non sono altro che residenti temporanei: la flora e la fauna antartiche, ancora non hanno alcuna paura dell’uomo*. Two solutions were evaluated as semi-acceptable i.e. *il principale motivo per cui la flora e la fauna di questo continente non temono il contatto umano è il fatto che l’Antartide non ha mai avuta una popolazione natia; perfino al[...]*. RP3b regards pre-modification area.



The position of the adjective in Italian usually follows the noun while in English is always positioned before the noun. The results were quite heterogeneous: one unacceptable solution *viaggio in mare che molte volte si rivela essere difficile*, one acceptable translation *viaggio solitamente difficile* and one semi-acceptable solution *viaggio per mare spesso difficoltoso* were proposed.

- RP4 (a, b) were not found challenging by students. RP4a obtained only one semi-acceptable solution *non cessa di far percepire* and two acceptable translation choices were assessed as acceptable i.e. *aumenta inevitabilmente il senso*[...]. RP4b did not pose any problem because of the equivalence between English and Italian in this context. The totality of students proposed acceptable solutions i.e. *'guadagnarsi' l'Antartide*.

In general, students' performance was satisfactory. The highest values were obtained by the following categories: figurative language, lexis and semantics. The lowest acceptability value was performed in cultural and pragmatic, and syntactic macro-areas.

### 3.8.4 Introducing Asia

**Introducing Asia**

Take a deep breath and let your senses explode. From ancient farming villages in India to the futuristic cityscape of Tokyo, Asia provides such variety and contrast it would take many lifetimes to even start scratching the surface. Above all, Asia is a spiritual place — **infused with** (RP4a) the gods of past and present: the ancient spirits of the land and the family, the teachings of Buddhism, the deities of Christianity and Hinduism and the rules of Islam. Across the **region** (RP2a), **scented smoke swirls** (RP1a) from millions of joss sticks placed in offering at the many shrines and temples **the faithful use to meditate and pray** (RP3a).

However, Asia is far more than its past. A **frenetic buzz** (RP2b) surrounds the cities: the fashion, culture and business in Hong Kong, Singapore and many others easily challenged the biggest European and American cities for their status as global hubs.

From sublime coastlines to snowcapped mountains, the majestic Mekong River to **wildlife infested jungle** (RP3b) ; Asian landscapes hold an immediacy and vibrancy that captivates and enchants (RP3b). And that's without mentioning the food. The freshness and flavour of Asian cuisine is famous the world over; now imagine actually **tasting the real deal**. (RP4b). With so many cuisines to choose from the only answer is to dive straight in and be prepared for a **taste-tingling joy** (RP1b) that will take your breath away.

**Figure 13: Second-year final translation activity “Introducing Asia”.**

### 3.8.4.1 Acceptability of Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Cpo	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Sde	3	2	1	3	2	3	3	3
Afi	1	3	1	1	1	3	3	3
Jci	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
Vda	1	2	1	1	3	3	2	3
Mbi	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Mfr	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3
<b>MEAN</b>	1.85	1.85	1.28	1.57	1.57	2.57	2.28	2.85

**Table 7: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in second-year final translation activity "Introducing Asia".**

Students seem to have a standard level of competence except for the RP4b – figurative use of the language – and RP3b – syntactical problems in the ST. In particular:

- RP1 (a, b) had to be adapted to the pragmatic and cultural context. Although RP1 could cause some syntactical problem, its difficulty lies in conveying the popular imagination about Asia. Most of the results had an 'acceptability' index of 2 or below. Therefore, a number of unacceptable solutions were provided such as *gira vorticosamente l'odore profumato, si possono sentire profumare*. However, two translation choices were assessed as acceptable: *è pervasa da un profumo proveniente, è profumata dai turbini di fumo*. Moreover, *giochi di fumo profumati* and *essenza profumata* were considered as semi-acceptable although some lexical mistranslations were present. RP1b refers to the Indian cuisine and the translations should convey the meaning of a spicy and tasty flavour. Solutions such as *esperienza dal sapore forte, sapori che vi conquisteranno il cuore* were evaluated as acceptable. Some translation choices score an 'acceptability' index of 1, such as either *esperienze gustative così intensa, piacevole pizzicore* or mistranslations i.e. *fremezete dalla voglia di assaggiare nuove pietanze*. Some solutions such as *gioia per i sensi, varietà di sapori* were assessed as semi-acceptable.
- RP2 (a, b) refer to the ability to find an adequate lexical term in the target text. RP2a was a common difficulty in translation. Only one acceptable solution was

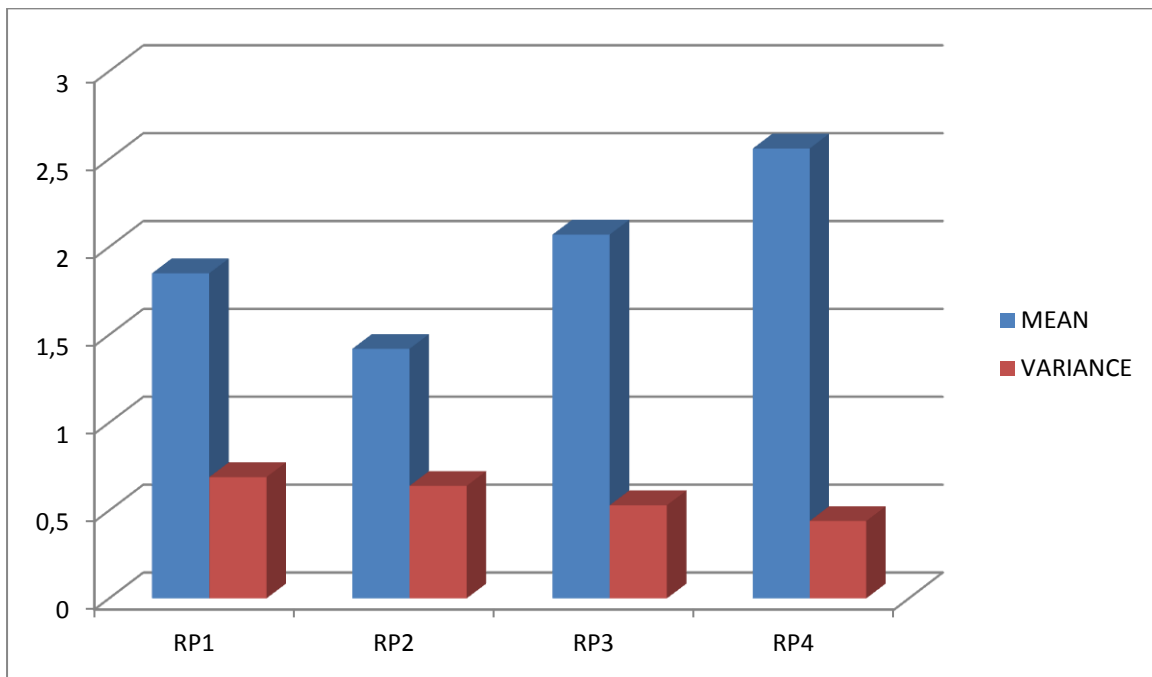
proposed i.e. *in tutta l'Asia*. The majority of students provided unacceptable solutions such as *regione, paese*. RP2b included terminological problem which should be adapted to the context of the source text. Most students proposed unacceptable solutions such as *brusio, ronzo, rumore*. Only two translation choices reached their peak in the 'acceptability' index: *pulsano di vita, sono animate*.

- RP3 (a, b) included a pre-modification and a syntactical problem. RP3a required a change of the order of the elements in the sentence. Only one student proposed an acceptable translation: *che i fedeli usano[...]*; although some omissions were present, two choices were assessed as semi-acceptable i.e. *dove si medita e prega, mentre si medita e prega* because students succeeded in conveying the meaning of the source text. However, most of the solutions were considered as unacceptable such as *a celebrazione della fedele usanza, durante la fedele usanza di pregare, che fanno da atmosfera per la preghiera*. RP3b provided many acceptable solutions such as *giungla selvaggia, giungla ricca di animali selvaggi*; only one choice was assessed as unacceptable i.e. *giungla infestata di animali*; and only one translation reached the 'acceptability' index of 2 : *giungla e fauna*.
- RP4 (a, b) refers to the figurative use of the language. RP4a was not particularly challenging for students as it showed by the 'acceptability' index. Most students proposed acceptable solutions such as *cominciarla a viverla appieno, aver iniziato a scoprirlo, visitarla tutta*. Only one solution was assessed as semi-acceptable i.e. *scalfirne la superficie*; two students' choices were considered as unacceptable solutions i.e. *raschiarne la superficie, trattarne superficialmente*. RP4b only produced a semi-acceptable solution: *gustarle al massimo della sua espressione*; while the other choices were considered as acceptable such as *assaporarli realmente, come deve essere mangiare l'originale, assaggiarla realmente*.

The mean of the Rich Points *a* and *b* has been grouped and compared with the variance index.

RICH POINTS	MEAN	VARIANCE
RP1	1.85	0.69
RP2	1.42	0.64
RP3	2.07	0.53
RP4	2.56	0.44

**Table 8: Mean and variance values of students' performance in the second-year translation activity "Introducing Asia".**



**Figure 14: Mean and variance values of students' performance of the second-year final translation activity "Introducing Asia".**

As shown in the table above, students performed quite well in figurative language category with a mean of 2.5 and with a variance index of 0.44; therefore, the results obtained in that category were homogenous. The second macro-area in which students obtained good results with a mean of 2 was the syntactical one. However, the variance

index showed that the level of competence was heterogeneous. In the cultural and pragmatic macro – area, students did not achieved good outcomes; therefore a variance index of 0.5 or above is considered a quite high value which represents the variety of the population’s competence. The category which seemed to be more challenging was the lexical and semantic one. The value of the mean was quite low: 1.4; however, the variance index indicates that the level of translation competence reached was variable.

### 3.9 Analysis of the third-year initial translation activity

In the third year students are required to translate promotional texts which are more challenging for them. However, at the beginning of the course, students had to translate a job application letter as it presented all the representative characteristics and problems they faced during the translation courses.

**Job Application Letter**

Ms Cath Harries  
Human Resources Manager  
Harpen Books Ltd  
9-11 Clapton Street  
Poole  
Dorset  
NP8 9QR

**Dear Ms Harries** (RP1a),

**Editor**

I wish to apply for the above post, advertised in *The Bookseller*.  
Currently I am working in a new small publishing company, *Notions* (RP3a), that specializes in highly designed, high quality non-fiction books (RP2a). Since I started here I have been (RP3b) the only full-time employee working on all editorial aspects of the books. Answering directly to the Publishing Director and the Editorial Director, I have a very wide range of responsibilities including editing on screen in InDesign and Microsoft Word, liaising with the designers and freelance editors checking manuscripts at the film stage, managing the stationery budget, Americanizing text, as well as signing off books, having checked the proofs.  
I have been at *Notions* for over a year, and have learnt a great deal (RP4a), but there is no longer the scope to use (RP4b) all my knowledge and experience. I am seeking a position that offers responsibility (RP2b) for the full range of publishing and editorial skills, as well as the opportunity to meet and work with a range of people. I like to think that I bring enthusiasm and adaptability (RP1b) to my work.  
I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this letter and my enclosed curriculum vitae. The telephone number I have given is my home one and all calls are answered.

I look forward to hearing from you.  
Yours sincerely,  
Javne Saunders

Figure 15: Third-year initial translation activity.

### 3.9.1 Acceptability Index of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Gso	1	1	1	3	1	2	3	2
Mbe	1	3	1	3	1	3	2	3
Eca	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Oco	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3
Aan	3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3
Ebo	1	3	1	1	2	1	3	3
Lgr	1	1	3	3	2	1	2	2
Lzo	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	3
Ssc	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2
Lda	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
Fca	2	3	1	2	1	1	3	1
Cpo	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
Sde	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	2
Afi	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	2
Jci	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Vda	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
Mba	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	3
Mbi	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	3
Cco	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	2
Mfr	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2
MEAN	1.65	1.75	1.35	1.55	1.55	1.55	2.8	2.45

**Table 9:** Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in their third-year initial translation activity.

Students' 'acceptability' index was quite low. It reached a value of 2 only in the figurative language category. Therefore, most Rich Points generated several translation problems. In particular:

- RP1 (a, b) could cause some difficulties since students are not used to write business letters. RP1a generated many unacceptable solutions such as *Spettabile Signora, Egregia Signora*. Only one solution was considered as acceptable *Gentile Dottoressa*. More than half of the sample translated "Dear" with semi-acceptable solutions such *Gentile Signora, Gentilissima Signora Harries*. In RP2b students had to use a word which should have a positive connotation; therefore translation choices such as *adattabilità, capacità di adattamento* were considered

unacceptable. *Flessibilità* was instead considered an acceptable choice since it was pragmatically correct in this context.

- RP2 (a, b) was the most challenging category of this text. RP2a required some terminological research on the publishing field. Many students struggle to find an acceptable solution, as it showed by the ‘acceptability’ index. Most of the sample provided unacceptable choices such as *design di libri di saggistica, libri non-fiction di alto design, libri realistici di alto design, non fiction di alta qualità*. Only one solution was considered acceptable i.e. *libri di saggistica caratterizzati da un alto livello di cura grafica*. Few translation choices obtained a score of 2 such as *libri di saggistica progettati accuratamente*. RP2b required to find a collocation which would be natural in Italian. Literal translations i.e. *offra responsabilità* were considered as unacceptable. Some choices were assessed as semi-acceptable such as *avere piena responsabilità, mi permetta di essere responsabile*. However, some students obtained an ‘acceptability’ index of 3 i.e. *mi dia la possibilità, offrire l’opportunità*.
- RP3 (a, b) concerned syntactical problem. RP3a required a modification of the order of the elements in order to sound natural to an Italian reader. Most of the solutions provided by students were evaluated as unacceptable such as *una giovane e piccola casa editrice, la Notions; una piccolo società pubblicitaria, la Notions; nuova, piccola impresa nel settore dell’editoria, la Notions*. Few translation choices were considered as semi-acceptable i.e. *presso Notions, una piccola e nuova casa editrice; piccola casa editrice di recente aperture, Notions*. Only two solutions were assessed as acceptable i.e. *in Notions, una piccola casa editrice di piccole dimensioni; presso la Notions, una piccola casa editrice*. In RP3b the duration form of the verb to be created some difficulties. Most students’ solutions were evaluated as unacceptable such as *da quando ho iniziato qui, sono stata l’unica impiegata; fin dal primo momento sono stata l’unica; dal mio arrivo sono stata l’unica impiegata*. Only few choices obtained a score of 3 such as *da quando ho iniziato a lavorare qui, sono l’unica; da quando sono stata assunta, sono l’unica impiegata*.
- RP4 (a, b) were related to the use of figurative language. RP4a was not challenging for students since almost the totality of the statistical population obtained an ‘acceptability’ index of 3. Many acceptable solutions were provided

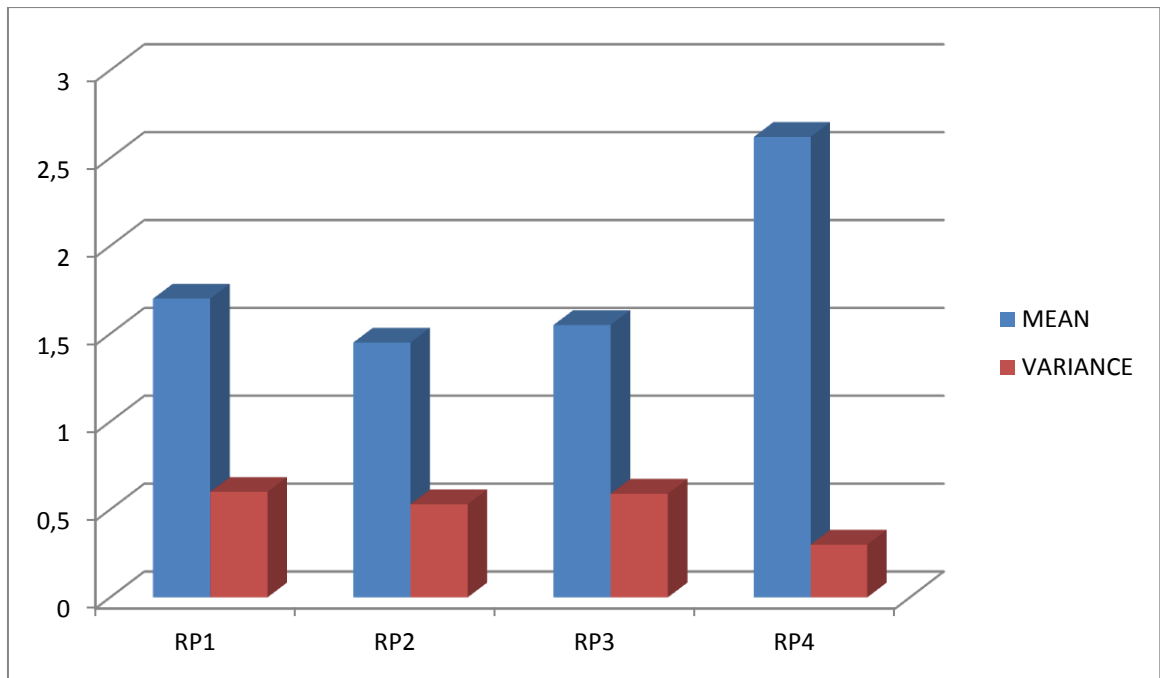
such as *ho imparato molto, ho avuto l'occasione di apprendere molto, ho tratto molto da questa esperienza*. Only two solutions were assessed as semi-acceptable since the register did not seem the most appropriated i.e. *ho imparato parecchio, ho imparato moltissimo*. RP4b caused some bad translation choices because students were not aware of the norms and conventions of the business letter. Two solutions were considered as unacceptable i.e. *l'azienda non mi da più l'opportunità, la casa editrice non mi offer più la possibilità*. Many semi-acceptable solutions were provided such as *non trovo più stimoli per, non ho più la possibilità di mettere alla prova, non c'è più spazio per le mie conoscenze*. Some of the translation choices proposed by the students were evaluated as acceptable i.e. *non ho più la possibilità di usare, penso di non aver più la possibilità di, non ho possibilità di dimostrare*.

The mean values of each Rich Points *a* and *b* have been grouped, and then compared to the variance index.

RICH POINTS	MEAN	VARIANCE
RP1	1.70	0.60
RP2	1.45	0.53
RP3	1.55	0.59
RP4	2.62	0.30

**Table 10: Mean and variance values in the third-year initial translation activity.**





**Figure 15: Mean and variance values of students' performance at the beginning of their third year.**

As shown in the table above, students performed well in the figurative language category. The mean values reach 2.5 and the variance index is less than 0.50. Therefore almost the totality of the students obtained excellent results in dealing with that type of RP. However, in the other categories students did not performed well. In particular, although the cultural and pragmatic area obtained a mean up to 1.5, the variance index shows that the students' abilities are not uniform. Moreover, in the syntactical area the mean value indicates that students struggled in finding an adequate translation solution; here, since the variance index is the highest value, there is not homogeneity among students' translation competence. The category in which the lowest results have been obtained is the lexical and semantic one. The mean values is around 1.40 and the variance index is higher than 0.50; therefore, the level of competence is quite homogenous though students' performance is quite low.

## 3.10 Analysis of the third-year final exams

At the end of the third year, students are required to translate promotional texts. Most of them were part of several WWF campaigns on responsible tourism and sustainable development. The language used and the functions of the text should be adapted to the function and text genre of the source text. However, since students took the exam in different dates, several source texts have been analysed.

### 3.10.1 Help Save The Fridge

**Help Save the Fridge** (RP4a)

The Fridge need your **help. Because much of the energy** (RP3a) we need to power it produces waste, pollutes the atmosphere and changes the climate. We can transition the way we produce and use energy in a way that will contribute to a sustainable future. We're campaigning in countries all around the world to provide solutions for governments, for companies and for all the members of society to make the right choices about energy conservation and use. And you, as an individual, can help just by the choices you make. Help us look after the world where you live at [panda.org/50WWF](http://panda.org/50WWF)

**Combating climate change**

In the Antarctic Circle, the **Sami people**( RP1a) **have herded reindeer for centuries** (RP3b), but the last 20 years have been different. "We had ancient methods of **foretelling the weather**" (RP2a), say **reindeer herder** (RP1b) Olav Mathis Eira. "Now it is no longer possible".

Winter rain used to fall only few times a century, but now it's common. The rain makes the snow icy, and the reindeer can't **get through to** (RP4b) the lichen they survive on in winter. "Now we have to feed the reindeer in the winter", says Eira. "It is a long way to go to bring the food to them, and it is, of course, very expensive. However, it is the only **choice** (RP2b) we have if we want to keep herding"

**Figure 16 : Third-year final translation activity "Help save the fridge".**

### 3.10.1.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Student	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Lgr	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	3

**Table 11: Acceptability of the Rich Points in the third-year final translation activity “Help save the fridge”.**

The level of competence reached by the students is ordinary. Except for the cultural macro-category, the students obtained a mean value of 2 or above. In general, the Rich Points selected did not seem to be particularly difficult. If we analyse them in detail:

- RP1 (a,b) required a cultural knowledge about that native population. RP1a was translated as Samoa and it was assessed as unacceptable. The name in Italian of this population is *il popolo Sami*. RP1b refers to a common activity of the population; the solution proposed by the student was evaluated as semi-acceptable: *mandriani di renne* since the Italian translation does not convey exactly the same meaning.
- RP2 (a, b) could not be translated literally. Therefore, students had to pay attention to the different lexical possibilities. RP2a should be translated as *alternativa* in this context; the student’s solution was assessed as semi-acceptable since *scelta* does not exactly correspond to the English word ‘choice’. RP2b was a problem of collocation. In Italian *prevedere il tempo* would be seen as an outward translation since this collocation does not exist. Therefore, *metodi di previsione del tempo* was considered as an semi-acceptable solution.
- RP3 (a, b) could cause some translation problems in terms of structure and meaning of the duration form. RP3a required some linking word in order to have the text cohesive. In RP3b the solution proposed by the student was evaluated as unacceptable since *hanno pascolato renne per secoli* is not what the English text says. Moreover, the translation of the duration form was a recurring problems in most of the texts. *Questo, perchè[...]*, which was the translation provided by the sample, was considered as acceptable since *questo* created cohesion between the two sentences.

- RP4 ( a, b) did not cause particular problem as it is showed by the mean value. RP4a refers to figurative language used by WWF to encourage people to commit to their cause. The translation choice *aiutaci a salvare i ghiacci* was assessed as semi-acceptable; an acceptable solution would have been *salviamo il Circolo polare artico*. RP4b did not create any difficulty; the student's solution was evaluated as acceptable *non riescono a raggiungere*.

### 3.10.2 Save the Dive Mask

**Save the Dive Mask** (RP4a)

The coral reefs where we dive need help. Overfishing, **careless tourism**(RP1a) and climate change are putting reefs and people's livelihoods at risk. From the Coral Triangle to the coastlines of Africa and Australia's Great Barrier Reef, WWF is promoting responsible tourism and pushing for protected areas and responsible fishing. Help us look after the world where you live at **panda.org/50**

**Threats to oceans and coasts**

**Oceans.** For centuries people have regarded (RP3a) them as an inexhaustible supply of food, a useful transport route, and a convenient dumping ground - simply too vast to be affected by anything we do.

But human activity, particularly over the last few decades, has finally pushed oceans to their limit.

- **Inadequate protection:** They might cover over 70% of our planet's surface, but only a tiny fraction of the oceans has been protected: just 0.6%(RP3b). Even worse, the vast majority of the world's few marine parks and reserves are protected in name only.
- **Tourism & development:** Around the world, coastlines have been steadily turned into new housing and **tourist developments** (Rp2a), and many beaches all but disappear under **flocks** (RP4b) of **holiday-makers** (RP1b) each year.
- **Climate change:** Coral bleaching, rising sea levels, changing species distributions - global warming and climate change are already having a **marked effect** (RP2b) on the oceans.

Figure 17: Third-year final translation activity "Help save the dive mask".

### 3.10.2.2 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Gso	1	1	3	1	2	2	3	2
Mbe	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2
Oco	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	1
Lzo	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	3
Lda	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	1
Sde	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	2
Afi	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	1
Jci	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	3
<b>MEAN</b>	1.12	2	2.12	1.75	1.25	1.75	1.75	1.87

**Table 12: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in the third-year final translation activity "Help Save the Dive Mask".**

According to the table above, this text presented some objective difficulties which result from the mean value. Only two RPs obtained a score above 2. However, the index will decreasing when the two RPs of the same category will be grouped. In detail:

- RP1 (a, b) needed some re- elaborated in accordance with the pragmatic context. In particular, RP1a also includes, within its meaning, a moral judgement. WWF has been campaigning and promoting responsible tourism. Almost the totality of the students proposed unacceptable solutions such as *turismo senza scrupoli*, *turismo non curante*, *turisti negligenti*. Only one solution was considered as semi-acceptable i.e *turismo irrispettoso dell'ambiente*. RP1b refers to a slight difference between the terms tourist and holiday-makers. The first word refers to someone who visits a place for interest, especially when on holiday. While the latter refers to a person who is on holiday away from where they usually live. Therefore, solutions such as *turisti* were assessed as semi-acceptable and solutions such as *vacanzieri* were evaluated as acceptable.
- RP2 (a, b) involved collocation and lexical issues. In RP2a, literal solutions were considered as unacceptable i.e *sviluppi turistici*, *a scopo turistico*. Only one choice obtained a score of 2: *sfruttati per il turismo*. Some students proposed

acceptable translations such as *zone turistiche, aree turistiche, strutture turistiche*. In RP2b few students provided acceptable choices i.e. *conseguenze profonde, conseguenze evidenti*. Many semi-acceptable solutions were proposed such as *un forte impatto, conseguenze non indifferenti*. Two students provided acceptable solutions such as *hanno già iniziato a lasciar traccia, stanno causando ripercussioni*.

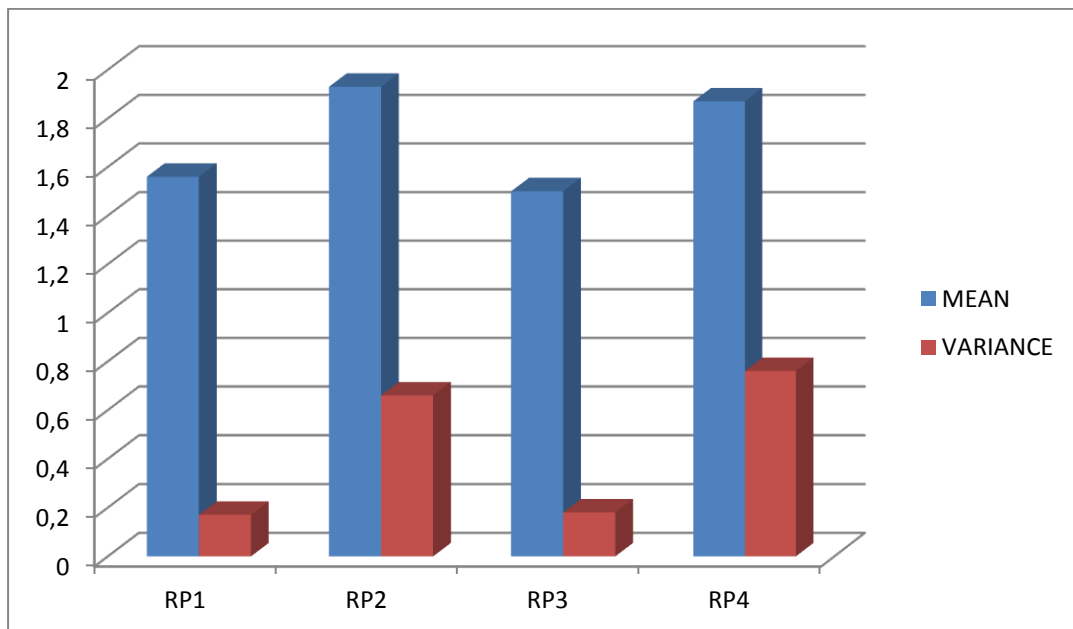
- RP3 (a, b) involves some modifications of the order of the elements and some re-elaborations of the syntactical structure. RP3a comprises the transformation of the duration form into an equivalent Italian translation. Most of the students failed in finding the correct correspondence; most solutions provided were assessed as unacceptable i.e. *gli oceani sono stati considerati per secoli, gli oceani per anni sono stati considerati*. Few choices were considered as semi-acceptable: *da secoli gli oceani vengono considerati*. RP3b required an adjustment of the unit of measurement and syntactical changes. None of students proposed an acceptable solutions. However, several semi-acceptable solutions are provided by students such as *anche se il 70% della superficie del nostro pianeta è coperta da oceani, solo una piccola parte di essi (appena lo 0.6%) è area protetta, Gli oceani occupano circa il 70% della superfice terrestre, ma solamente un'infinitesimale frazione di oceano è stata protetta: si stima un misero 0.6%*. The latter translation was considered as semi-acceptable because negative connotations should not be expressed explicitly.
- RP4 (a, b) refers to the use of figurative language. RP4a generated only three solutions which value was over 2 i.e. *salviamo il fondale corallino, salviamo l'ecosistema marino*. Most of the translation choices provided unacceptable solutions such as *salviamo la maschera subacquea, tuffati nella protezione delle acque*. RP4b obtained more heterogeneous solutions – respectively acceptable, semi-acceptable and unacceptable solutions: *orde, folla, mandrie*.

The mean values of each Rich Points *a* and *b* were grouped and compared to the variance index.

RICH POINTS	MEAN	VARIANCE
-------------	------	----------

RP1	1.56	0.17
RP2	1.93	0.66
RP3	1.50	0.18
RP4	1.87	0.76

**Table 13: Mean and variance values in third-year final activity “Help Save the Dive Mask”.**



**Figure 18: Mean and variance values of students’ performance in the third-year final translation activity “Help Save the Dive Mask”.**

As shown in the table above, students’ level of competence is represented by a low value. The category in which students obtained the highest outcomes is the lexical and semantic one; however, as it can be seen by the variance index, students’ performance is heterogeneous. The previous situation is also represented by the mean and variance indexes of the RP4 ( figurative use of the language). The macro – areas in which students obtained the worst outcomes is the pragmatic and syntactical one; moreover, the variance shows that students’ level of translation competence is quite constant. Therefore, within

this categories, the competence level is quite low and most of the students obtained scarce results.

### 3.10.3 The extinction of Ecuador's rarest species is just too much to bear.

#### The extinction of Ecuador's rarest species is just too much to bear

In a remote and unique habitat, engulfed (RP4a) in a near permanent blanket of fog, rare and magical mammals (RP1a) like the spectacled bear and mountain tapir make their homes (RP4b). Flourishing alongside them are forests of micro orchids, some of the world's tiniest plant species, which can only survive in the conditions particular to these locations.

Defending these extraordinary forests, and the plants and animals that rely on them, is a shared vision (RP2a) for international charity World Land Trust and its Ecuadorian partner, the charity Fundación EcoMinga. Since 2007 the two organisations have been working together (RP3a) to buy parcels of land, bit by bit, acre by acre, to create nature reserves to secure the future of known species and those yet to be discovered.

Recent reports (RP2b) show that a cluster of properties in the Andean cloud forest (RP1b) have come on to the market which is exciting news (RP3b). The properties are close to existing reserves and a priority for protection, but time is short: World Land Trust urgently needs £500,000 to save these areas and the species they shelter.

Donations will make a real difference to the world's remaining cloud forests, preserving them as a permanent safe habitat for all the species that depend on them for survival. The future of these fragile ecosystems is in our hands, and we can act together to save them today.

Figure 19: Third-year final translation activity "The extinction of Ecuador's rarest species is just too much to bear".



### 3.10.3.1 The acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Ssc	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	1
Cpo	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
Vda	3	1	2	3	1	3	2	3
Mba	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	2
Mbi	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	2
<b>MEAN</b>	2,8	2	2,4	2,2	1,6	2,2	2,8	2,2

**Table 14: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in the third-year final translation activity "The extinction of Ecuador's rarest species is just too much to bear".**

Students obtained a good mean value up to 2, except for the performance in syntactical category which value is lower than 2. Therefore, this text was not particularly challenging for the sample, as it is showed in the table above. If we analyse each Rich Point in detail, we can have an idea of students' performance in each category:

- RP1 (a, b) involves some extra-linguistic knowledge. In RP1a, students had to find the most suitable solution in order to convey the positive and almost magical value attributed by the WWF to animals. Therefore, literal solutions were considered as semi-acceptable i.e. *magici*; instead, translations such as *incantevoli*, *misteriosi* were assessed as acceptable solutions. RP1b was a clear geographical and encyclopedic knowledge. Literal translations such as *foresta delle Ande*, *nuvolosa foresta andina* were evaluated as unacceptable. Two solutions were considered as acceptable i.e. *foresta pluviale delle Ande*, *floreste pluviali andine*.
- RP2 (a, b) did not pose a difficult translation problem. In RP2a all the choices proposed by students were considered as semi-acceptable i.e. *intenzione condivisa*, *sogno comune* or as acceptable i.e. *obiettivo*, *scopi condivisi*. RP2b was a problem of the most adequate semantic alternative. Almost the totality of the sample proposed semi-acceptable translation choices such as *rapporti*, *resoconti*; only one student's 'acceptability' index reached the value of 3.
- RP3 (a, b) resulted quite problematic for the students, as it showed by the values of the 'acceptability' index. In particular, RP3a was the most challenging since it required syntactical modification of the word order. Three solutions were

considered as unacceptable such as *il che è una notizia emozionante, il che è una notizia straordinaria*. Only one translation choice was considered as acceptable: *emersa una straordinaria notizia: una [...]*. RP3b corresponds to English duration form of the verb. Only two choices obtained a score of 1 such as *hanno lavorato*. However, most of the students proposed acceptable solutions i.e. *dal 2007 lavorano*.

- RP4 (a, b) did not generated many difficulties. RP4a was the Rich Points in which students reached the highest value; only one solution was evaluated as semi-acceptable: *inghottito in una coltre di nebbia*. However, most of the students' translation solutions were assessed as acceptable i.e. *circondato da una coltre di nebbia, avvolto in una coltre di nebbia*. RP4b generated heterogeneous solutions: the literal translation *costruiscono la loro casa* was assessed as unacceptable; *costruiscono le loro tane, costruiscono i loro rifugi* were considered as semi-acceptable; the translation choices *vivono, abitano* were evaluated as acceptable.

### 3.10.4 Help Save the 'Wow'

**Help Save the 'wow'**

Saving nature is at the very heart of what we do as WWF (RP3a). But our work is far from done. Humans are behind the current rate of species extinction, which is at least 100-1.000 times higher than nature intended. WWF's 2014 Living Planet Report found wildlife populations of vertebrate species — mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish — have declined by 52 percent over the last 40 years.

And the impacts will reach far beyond the potential cultural loss of iconic species like tigers, rhinos and whales.

The good news is we've also seen what's working (RP1a). WWF has been part of successful wildlife recovery stories (RP3b) and this in turn is helping protect rich and varied ecosystems while ensuring people continue to benefit from nature.

This much is clear: we cannot afford to fail (RP2a) in our mission to save a living planet.

**Help save the 'wow'** (RP4a)

These giants of the animal kingdom need help. Despite their strength and cunning they're no match for (RP4b) a poacher (RP1b)'s rifle. For 50 years WWF has been securing protected areas worldwide, but these aren't enough to stop the killing. To disrupt the sophisticated criminal gangs (RP2b) supplying animal parts to lucrative illegal markets, we are working with governments to toughen law enforcement. We're also working with consumers to reduce the demand for unlawful wildlife products. Help us to look after the world where you live at panda.org

**Figure 20: Third-year final translation activity "Help save the wow".**

### 3.10.4.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Eca	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	2
Aan	2	3	3	1	2	2	1	3
Ebo	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	1
Fca	1	3	2	3	2	1	2	3
Cae	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	3
Cco	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	3
<b>MEAN</b>	1.66	2.66	2.16	2.33	2.33	1.16	1.33	2.50

**Table 15: Acceptability index and mean values of students' performance in the third-year final translation activity " Help save the wow".**

In general, except for syntactical and figurative language categories, the mean of cultural and lexical areas reached the value of 2. Therefore, the level of translation competence achieved by students in this text is quite ordinary. In particular:

- RP1 (a, b) required some modifications according to the cultural and pragmatic context. In RP1a any solution was assessed as acceptable. Many of the translation choices proposed by students were evaluated as semi-acceptable i.e. *sappiamo come agire, è bene sottolineare anche i successi raggiunti*. Only two choices obtained a score of 1: *abbiamo notato i progressi, abbiamo trovato cosa sta funzionando*. RP1b involved some moral and cultural judgements about the hunt activity. Most of the solutions were considered as acceptable i.e. *bracconieri, cacciatori di frodo*. Only two solutions obtained an 'acceptability index' of 1 i.e. *cacciatori* since the term does not refer to illegal activity.
- RP2 (a, b) refers to the different semantic meaning of words. In RP2a the totality of the solutions proposed were considered as semi-acceptable since *fallire* could have been replaced by another Italian verb such as *perdere*. In RP2b the results were not homogenous. All the choices provided were considered as unacceptable i.e. *band, gang* or acceptable such as *gruppi criminali*.
- RP3 (a, b) students had the lowest outcomes. RP3a generated some acceptable solutions such as *salvare la natura è alla base di ciò che facciamo, salvare la natura è il fulcro di quello che facciamo*, although the position of the elements in the Italian sentence is not completely natural. Only two solutions were assessed as

acceptable: *in quanto WWF il nostro obiettivo è di proteggere la natura, ciò che ci sta più a cuore come WWF è salvare la natura*. In RP3b the ‘acceptability’ index did not reach its peak. Most solutions were considered as unacceptable i.e. *storie di guarigione avvenute con successo, storie di riprese vittoriose del mondo animale* or semi-acceptable such as *storie a lieto fine di recupero della vita allo stato naturale* since the coherence and some connotations of the source text were activated in the target text.

- RP4 (a, b) pose some difficulties related to the translation of the figurative use of the language in accordance with the genre type. RP4a was the most challenging for students as it is shown by the mean of the ‘acceptability’ index in the table above. Most students achieved unacceptable solutions such as *aiutaci a salvare lo wow, aiutali a salvare l’effetto wow*. Two translation choices were considered as semi-acceptable: *aiutaci a salvare la meraviglia, aiutaci a salvare lo stupore*. RP4b obtained the highest scores. Most of the solutions proposed by the sample were evaluated as acceptable i.e. *non possono competere, non sono abbastanza*. Only two solutions were assessed as semi-acceptable *non c’è scampo*, and unacceptable *non sono alla pari*.

### 3.10.5 Think before you print

**Think before you print.** (RP1a) A new **green** (RP4a) **file format** (RP2a): WWF

The WWF format is a PDF that cannot be printed out. It's a simple way to avoid unnecessary printing. So here's your **chance** (RP3a) to save trees and help the environment. Decide for yourself which documents **don't need printing out** (RP3b) – then simply save them as WWF.

SAVE AS WWF, SAVE A TREE

[Click here to learn all about the WWF format...](#)  
 Download WWF format for free now  
 For windows ab XP

**How can I participate?**

1. Download free software to support the WWF format.
2. Save your document as WWF and send it out.

**Who's already involved?** (RP1b)

More than 53,000 companies, organizations and individuals have already downloaded the WWF software – all over the world.

**Save as wwf – save resources** (RP2b) – **save a tree**

WWF has long worked with companies and consumers to promote responsible paper use and the option to "Save as WWF" **compliments** (RP4b) and reinforces other well-established campaigns – most notably the "Think Before You Print" initiative.

Figure 21: Third-year final translation exam “think before you print”.

#### 3.10.5.1 Acceptability of the Rich Points

Student	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Mfr	3	1	3	3	2	3	3	1

Table 16: Acceptability index of the third-year final translation activity “Think before you print”.

This text did not pose many translation problems. The students performed quite well in almost all the categories presented. If we analyse them in detail:

- RP1 (a, b) required some extra-linguistic competence. RP1a did not generate any problem since the cultural reference “ Think before you act” is shared by both languages. Student’s solution was assessed as acceptable *prima di stampare rifletti*. RP1b was on the most challenging Rich Points of the text. The choice proposed was assessed as unacceptable *chi è già coinvolto?* because in an Italian text the verb would be in an active form and a noun would be preferred to a verb.
- RP2 (a, b) refer to terminological and lexical adequate choices. RP2a was simply translated as *formato* since the use of the word file in this context literal would not mean anything to an Italian reader. In RP2b, collocation was not found a difficulty translation problem. The students obtained an ‘acceptability’ index of 3, since the translation *risparmia risorse* was considered an acceptable collocation in Italian.
- RP3 (a, b) required some syntactical modification. RP3a includes the right use of linking words. The coherence of this sentence with the previous one was considered as semi-acceptable since *questa* is not the most suitable solution in this text. RP3b highlights the different use of the passive and active form between English and Italian. The solution provided by the student obtain an index of 3 since *puoi evitare di stampare* reflects the natural use of the language of the target text.
- RP4 (a, b) were related to the use of figurative language. RP4a did not pose particular translation problems since the reference to the green colour with the meaning of *ecologico* is a common word association in Italian. RP4b was found particularly challenging as it showed by the low ‘acceptability’ index obtained by the student. The verb ‘to compliment’ was translated as *unire*. Therefore, this translation choice was evaluated as unacceptable. An acceptable solution could have been *lodare* or *elogiare*.

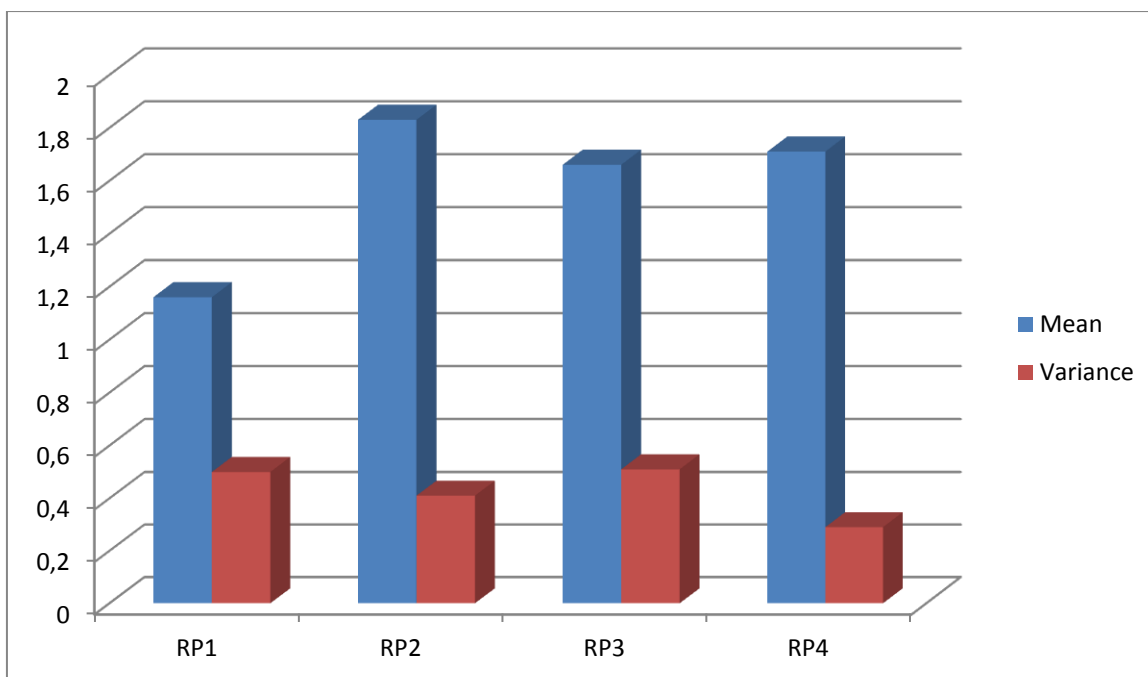
# CHAPTER 4

## 4.1. Discussion and interpretation of the results

In the previous chapter, the ‘acceptability’ index of several source texts was analysed. However, in order to compare the results, the values of the Rich Points of the final exams of the second and third year have been grouped together. The results obtained have been discussed in relation to the research variables and the sub-competences selected in the PACTE’s model for this study. Therefore, this enabled to show the general trends of the level of translation competence reached by students during their bachelor degree. Moreover, the outcomes are compared to the marks of the final written exams of EN>IT translation courses. In order to answer my research questions, the results are presented in a chronological order so that the level of students’ translation competence can be analysed clearly.

*3. Which categories did need to be improved at the beginning of the second year and which areas did not present particular translation problems?*

At the beginning of the second year, students approached translation for the first time and their ability to reflect on the language and its structural characteristics was not quite developed, as it is shown by the low scores of the ‘acceptability’ index of the second-year initial translation activity (see section 4.1, chapter 3). Therefore, their knowledge about translation and their metalinguistic awareness of L1 and L2, as well as their L2 level might have affected their ability to solve the translation problems posed by the Rich Points selected in the source text. The ‘acceptability’ score was expected to be quite low and homogenous.



**Figure 21: Mean and variance values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year.**

In detail, the exact values per Rich Point are:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>VARIANCE</b>
RP1	1.16	0.50
RP2	1.83	0.41
RP3	1.66	0.51
RP4	1.71	0.29

**Table 17: Mean and variance values per Rich Point at the beginning of the second year.**

As expected, the mean values were quite low. In each category the scores obtained were lower than 2. However, the variance value was slightly higher than expected: a score of 0.50 or more proves that students achieved different levels of translation competence. In this case, the most homogenous category was the one relating to the figurative use of language, while the level of syntax turned out to be the most heterogeneous.

As shown in the table above, students needed to improve in all the categories selected: a score lower than 2 is not sufficient to achieve a good translation competence level. In

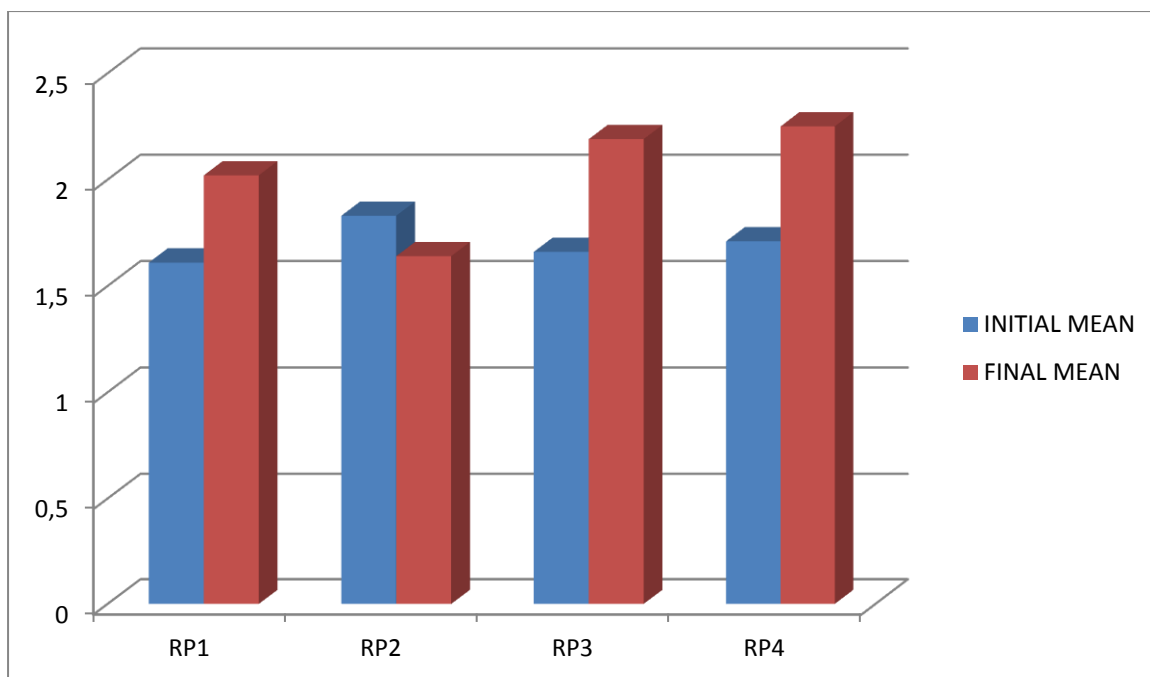


particular, the category which was found to be the most challenging was the one related to culture and pragmatics. Students are used to dealing with lexical, syntactic problems since during their first year of university they focus on grammatical and structural characteristics of the English language. This allows them to reflect on the characteristics of their native language. Therefore, culture and pragmatics are the features that are learned by practice, and by immersion in L2. It is not possible to know and understand cultural references only through linguistic analysis. Hence, knowledge of the different norms and conventions which regulate written communication is essential for the development of this macro-area.

*1. Did practice and exposure to translation activity develop their translation competence throughout second and third year of University?*

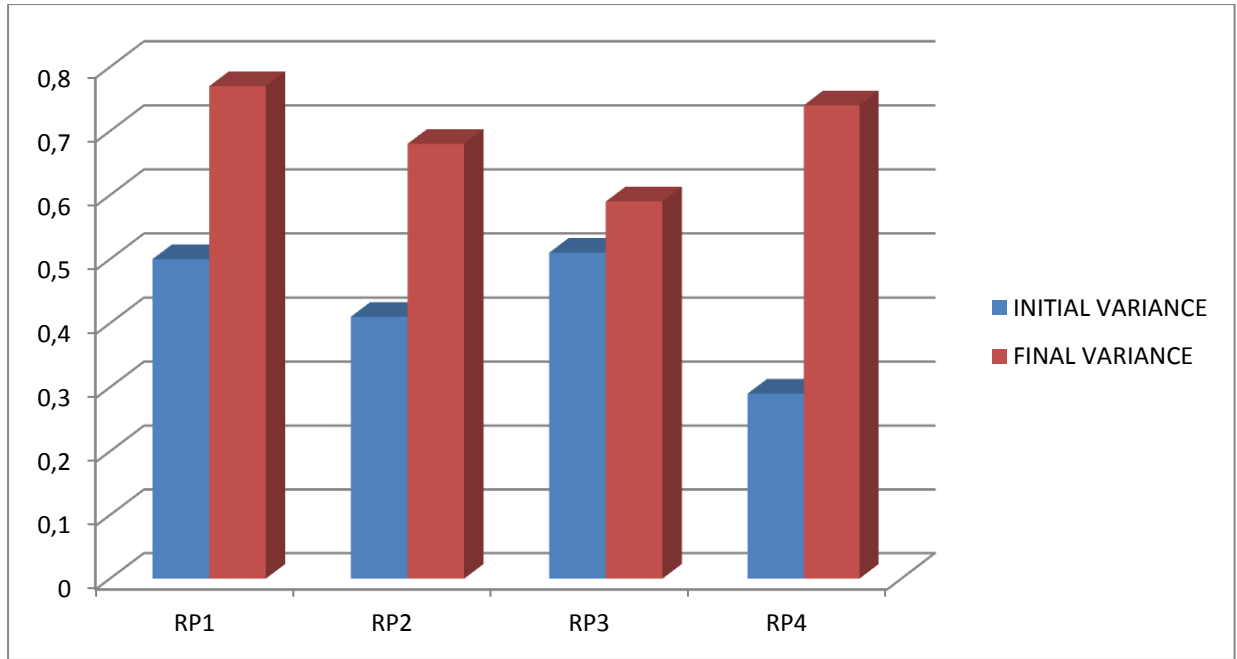
The EN>IT translation courses focused on cooperative learning through the division of the class into small translation group. Each student – with their team – had to translate several texts and discuss together the problems they found, with the aim of adopting the most suitable strategy to solve them. Hence, the possibility to reflect on the particularities of the English language and on the discrepancies between L1 and L2 should enable students to develop translation awareness. At the same time, it should foster knowledge about translation and bilingual competence. Moreover, when students cannot solve the problem easily, they are encouraged to use parallel texts or other resources to cope with the difficulties they encounter.

In order to analyse if TC has increased through practice and exposure to translation, a comparison between the initial and the final results obtained by students in the second and third year has been made. The trend of ‘acceptability’ index of the second-year EN>IT course can be summarised as follows:



**Figure 22: Mean values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year and the end of their third year.**

In general, the results show an increase in TC throughout the second-year translation course. However, in order to identify if the improvements per each Rich Point were homogenous, the variance indexes of the first translation task and the final year exams have been compared.



**Figure 23: Variance values of students’ performance at the beginning of their second year and at the end of their third year.**

The values obtained by the two tables above have been summarised in Table 18 below:

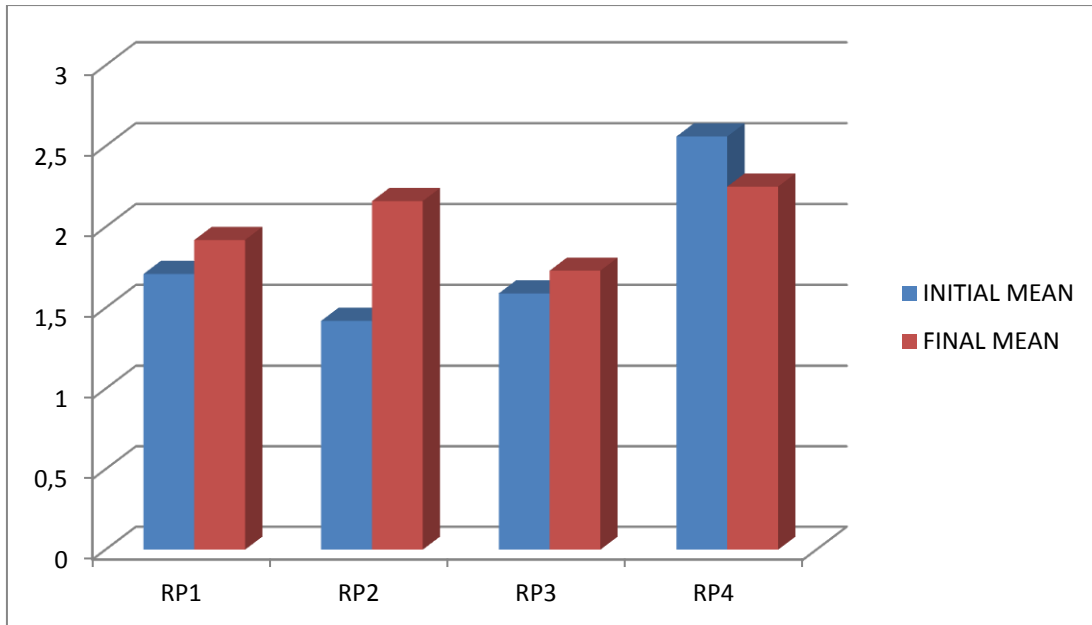
<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>INITIAL MEAN</b>	<b>INITIAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>FINAL MEAN</b>	<b>FINAL VARIANCE</b>
RP1	1.61	0.50	2.02	0.77
RP2	1.83	0.41	1.64	0.68
RP3	1.66	0.51	2.19	0.59
RP4	1.71	0.29	2.25	0.74

**Table 18: Mean and variance values of students’ performance at the beginning of their second year and at the end of their third year.**

As the data show, the ‘acceptability’ index increased considerably. Therefore, all the categories produced improvements except for the lexical and semantic area. If we compare the percentage with which the other categories grew, the decrease of RP2 was particularly significant, as it went down by a factor of 0.20. However, variance value shows that students’ level did not remain stable. Hence, among the statistical population the outcomes are variable and inconstant. So, if we analyse all these data as a whole, it could be said that on varying the ‘acceptability’ value, the variance index varied as well.

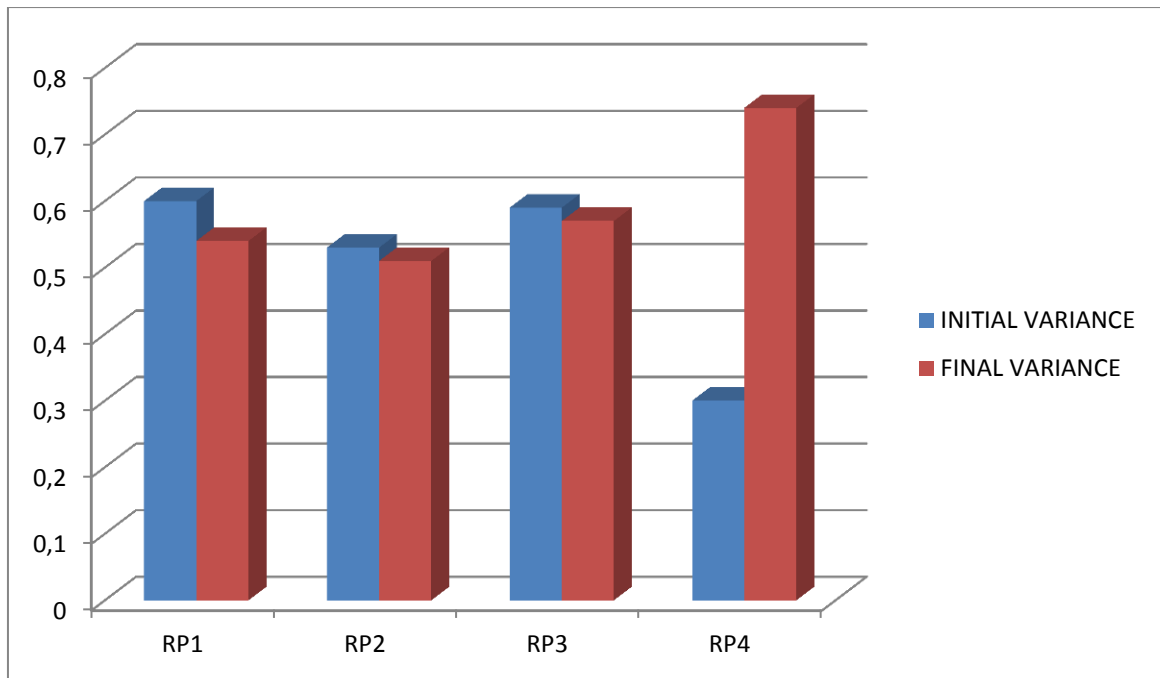
The direct correlation between these two values highlights that, although students improved their translation competence, there is a gap between the peak and low values.

The trends of the third-year EN>IT translation course have been outlined as follows:



**Figure 24: Mean values of students' performance throughout their third year.**

As shown in the chart above, the level of translation competence throughout the third year increased in all the categories with the exception of figurative language macro-area. In order to have a clear idea of the general trends, the variance indexes have also been analysed.



**Figure 25: Variance values of students' performance throughout their third year.**

The values obtained have been grouped together in Table 19 below, in order to capture results at a glimpse:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>INITIAL MEAN</b>	<b>INITIAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>FINAL MEAN</b>	<b>FINAL VARIANCE</b>
RP1	1.71	0.60	1.92	0.54
RP2	1.42	0.53	2.16	0.51
RP3	1.59	0.59	1.73	0.57
RP4	2.56	0.30	2.25	0.74

**Table 19: Mean and variance values of students' performance throughout their third year.**

If we compare the data, the students' ability to solve translation problems improved significantly in all the macro-areas except for the figurative language category which decreased by as much as 0.30. However, the variance value shows that the homogeneity among the group has slightly increased. Hence, although students did not perform well, the level of TC among students is quite uniform. In general, the results obtained by the table above are quite encouraging, since variance and the 'acceptability' index did not increase simultaneously. Therefore, all students achieved a higher level of competence. The inverse correlation between the mean and the variance underlines that students'

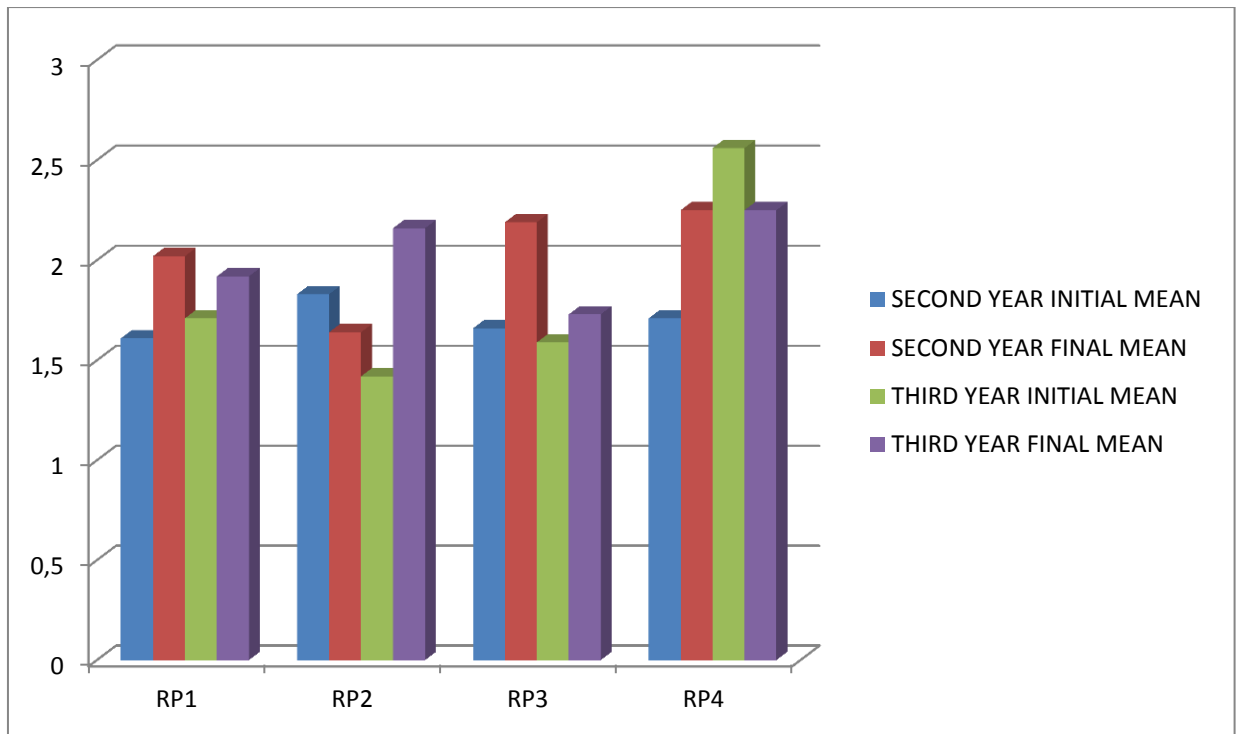
improvements were generally shared by almost the totality of the statistical population. However, in the case of figurative language category, the correlation between the aforementioned values is direct, since the decrease of the ‘acceptability’ values was accompanied by an increase in variance.

In conclusion, the data discussed above show that – in both second and third year – translation competence had improved and been influenced by collaborative relationship between students. Therefore, team work has been demonstrated to be an effective and useful tool for the improvement of translation competence.

*1. In which categories did students obtain the most successful outcomes?*

Translation is a complex activity which includes a series of interrelated sub-competences. TC can be improved only through practice and a proficiency level in L2 as well as L1. By translating, students acquire awareness of the required competencies. It should be noted, however, that language students did not necessarily want to become professional translators; translation is seen as a part of their learning process. Still, although the general level of TC was not outstanding, several improvements in each of the categories selected were found.

In order to evaluate the trend of the statistical population’s outcomes, the ‘acceptability’ index of the beginning and the end of the second-year EN>IT translation course has been correlated to the ‘acceptability’ values at the beginning and at the end of the third-year passive translation course. The results have been summarized in Tables 9 and 10 below:



**Figure 26: Mean values of students' performance throughout their second and third year.**

The mean values have been summed up, as follows:

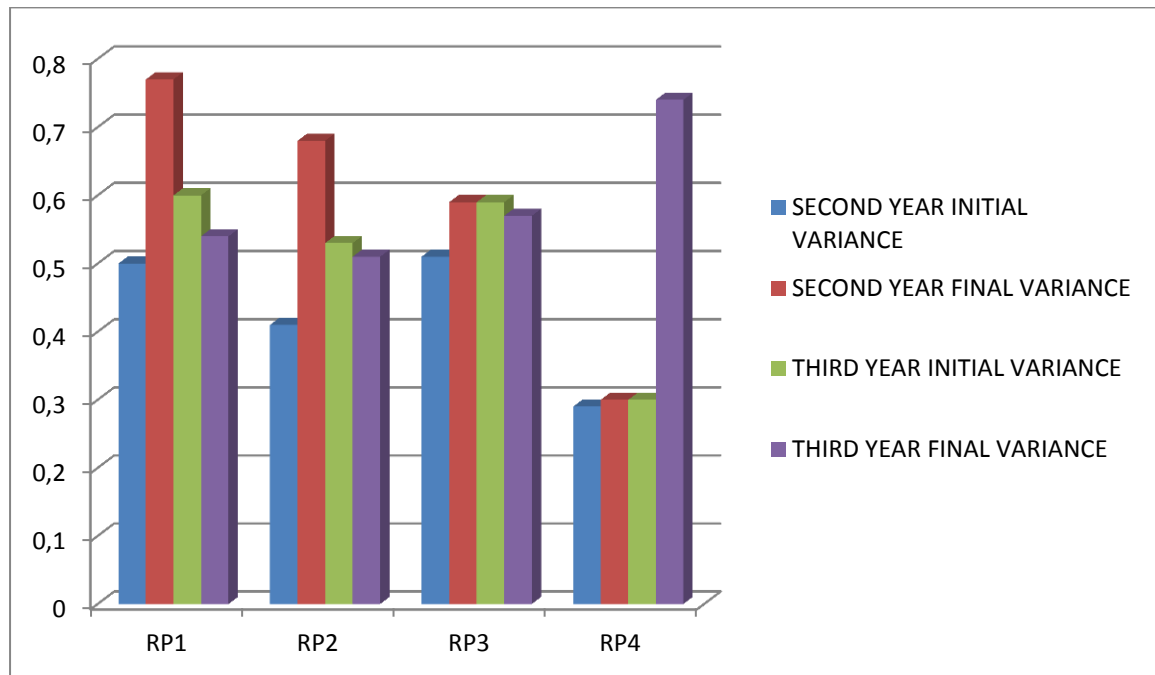
<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR INITIAL MEAN</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR FINAL MEAN</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR INITIAL MEAN</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR FINAL MEAN</b>
RP1	1.61	2.02	1.71	1.92
RP2	1.83	1.64	1.42	2.16
RP3	1.66	2.19	1.59	1.73
RP4	1.71	2.25	2.56	2.25

**Table 20: Mean values per Rich Point throughout second- and third- year translation activities.**

As shown in the table above, the trend of the 'acceptability' of the Rich Points is not encouraging. In any category the levels have been stable or resulted in a significant improvement. The mean values exhibit a growth between the beginning and the end of the second year and between the beginning and the end of the third year. Although a slight decrease or stability could have been normal since promotional texts are more

difficult to translate than tourist ones, the results show that the trend of the level competence has been swinging.

In order to have a clear picture of the level of TC achieved and to establish in which categories the values generated the most or the less successful outcomes, the variance indexes have also been compared.



**Figure 27: Variance values of students' performance throughout their second and third year.**

The results of the table are also numerically summarised in Table 21 below for greater clarity:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR INITIAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR FINAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR INITIAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR FINAL VARIANCE</b>
RP1	0.50	0.77	0.60	0.54
RP2	0.41	0.68	0.53	0.51
RP3	0.51	0.59	0.59	0.57



RP4	0.29	0.30	0.30	0.74
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**Table 21: Variance values of students' performance throughout their second and final year.**

By analysing the results by category, it is possible to get a whole picture of the general trend of TC possessed by students in the four moments selected for this study:

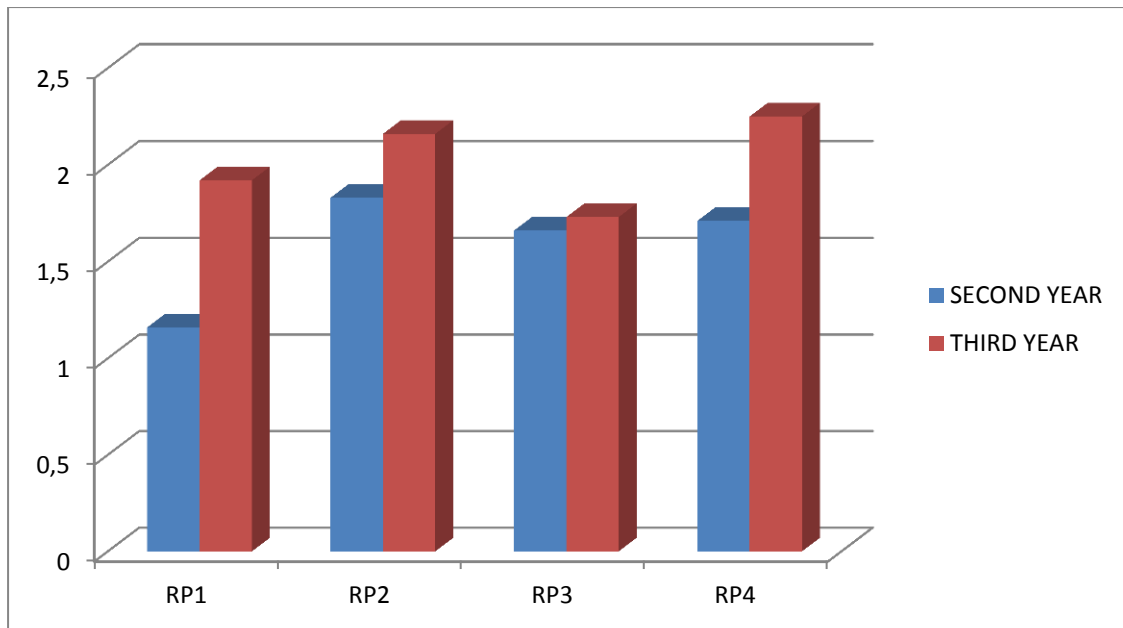
- RP1 generated varying outcomes throughout second- and third-year translation. The mean values grew and declined at different times. In particular, the initial mean marked a slight improvement at the end of the second year. However, it decreased between the end of the second year and the beginning of the third year, and it again rose at the end of the third year. However, as the students' competence varied, the variance index tells another story. Variance increased at the end of the second year, but then the level went down regularly. Therefore, translation competence had a more uniform level. In general, despite the varying values, it is possible to detect an improvement in homogeneity and quality of the translation from the beginning of the course to the end of it.
- RP2 produced contradictory outcomes. The mean values decreased at the end of the second year and they fell again at the beginning of the third year, however it rose at the end of the final year, with a general increase of 0.30. The variance index shows a slight worsening from the beginning to the end of the second year; however, it then constantly decreased throughout the third year. In general, a homogeneity and some improvements in this macro-area were found.
- RP3 was the category which obtained the most constant results according to the variance index. Although variance was uniform, there were slight swings. Therefore, students competence was quite homogenous. However, it cannot be said the same for the mean value. It produced a relevant improvement at the end of the second year, but its value then decreased at the beginning of the third year and it scarcely increased at the end of third year. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the second year to the end of the third year a slight improvement was found.
- RP4 was the only category in which the results of the mean values improved from the beginning of the second year to the beginning of the third year, although at the end of the third year the value went slightly down. However, the levels of the

variance were quite steady; variance rose at the end of the final year. Nevertheless, significant improvements and levels of homogeneity were present.

In conclusion, the category in which students obtained the most successful outcomes and consequently a lower level of variation was the figurative language category, while the area in which students' performance obtained the lowest degree of TC was the syntactic one. Moreover, data show that there was a significant oscillation between the results obtained at the end of the second year and at the beginning of the third year. This can be attributed to the fact the both EN>IT translation courses were in the second semester; between the second and third year there was a gap of six months in which students did not take any passive translation class. Therefore, the results underline, again, the importance of practice and exposure to translation: they have to be continuous in order to obtain a constant development of TC among students.

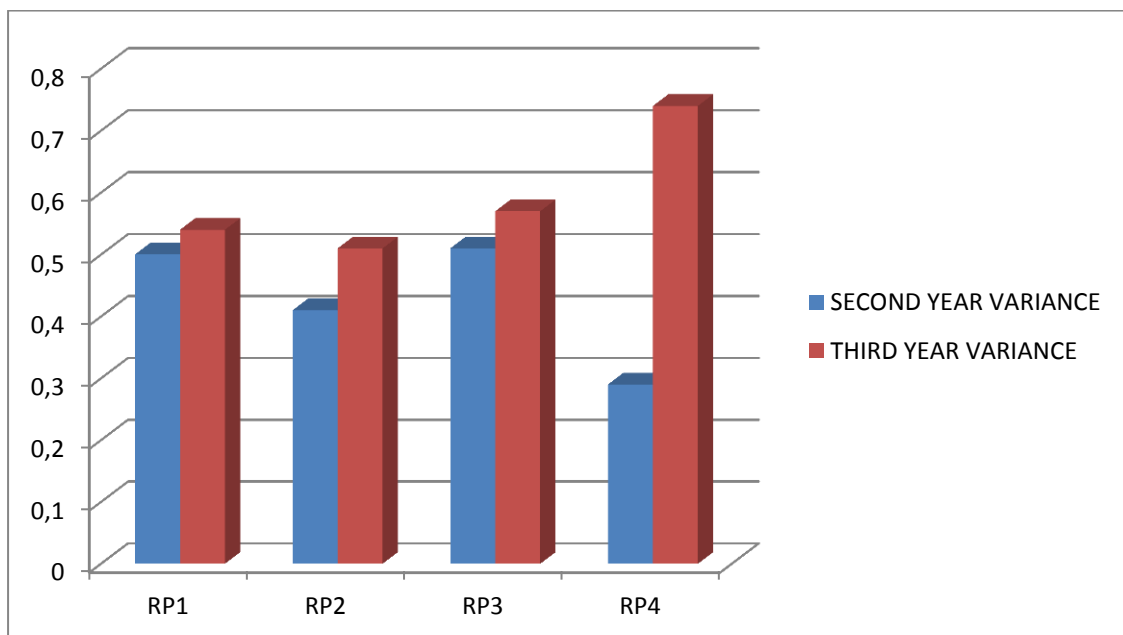
*1. Have the students improved in EN>IT translation during their undergraduate course?*

To answer this research question, it is necessary to compare the general level of translation competence possessed by students at the beginning of the second year and the competence achieved at the end of their bachelor degree.



**Figure 28: Mean values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year and the end of their third year.**

Therefore, the mean values of the Rich Points selected in the source texts have been compared to the variance indexes in order to have a more objective and complete picture of the whole development trend.



**Figure 29: Variance values of students' performance at the beginning of their second year and the end of their third year.**

The data obtained in Figures 28 and 29 above have been grouped into the following table:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR INITIAL MEAN</b>	<b>SECOND YEAR INITIAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR FINAL VARIANCE</b>	<b>THIRD YEAR FINAL MEAN</b>
RP1	1.16	0.50	0.54	1.92
RP2	1.83	0.41	0.51	2.16
RP3	1.66	0.51	0.57	1.73
RP4	1.71	0.29	0.74	2.25

**Table 22: Mean and variance values of students' performance throughout their bachelor degree.**

As shown in the table above, the mean values of each category registered an impressive improvement in the development of translation competence in passive translation. The most impressive outcomes were generated by the cultural and pragmatic macro-area. The 'acceptability' index rose by a factor of 0.76, and the variance value was almost constant. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that, although a significant improvement was noticed, the level reached in this category at the end of the third year is quite low and inadequate for an undergraduate student. The second area in which students obtained the most significant results was the figurative language one. The mean value rose of 0.50. On the other hand, it should be highlighted that the variance value increased consistently. Therefore there is a huge gap between excellent and poor performance among students. An improvement was also found in the lexical and semantic category. The mean value increased by a factor of 0.30 and the variance index shows that the level reached by students was quite homogenous. However, as for RP1, at the end of the third year, the level was expected to be higher, since students should possess a proficient level of L2 and good knowledge of English translation's norms. The area with the slightest improvements was the syntactic one. The mean value increased by a factor of 0.07. It can be said that students' ability remained steady since that change cannot be considered as a significant index of improvement. Moreover, the variance value shows that the competence level was shared by the totally of the statistical population.

5. *Did students achieve the objectives of their active translation courses? Are they able to translate tourist and promotional texts according to the functions and the genre of the source text?*

At the end of the third year, students should be able to analyse the texts at micro (lexico-grammar) and macro (function-genre) level, and to produce target texts with lexical, syntactic and pragmatic accuracy. Therefore, translation competence achieved by students should comprise bilingual, instrumental, knowledge of translation and strategic sub-competencies which are thought to be specific of translators. Nevertheless, the aim of the bachelor degree in *Mediazione linguistica e culturale* is to train future language mediators; therefore the exposure to translation activity is not as massive as the one of Translation and Interpreting degree courses. Hence, it cannot be expected that students achieve an excellent level of translation competence. Moreover, it should be said that the whole curriculum is not entirely centered on linguistic disciplines, but it also includes a wide range of subject areas. On the other hand, translation is seen as a tool of language learning, since it develops reading and comprehension skills, metalinguistic awareness, as well as foster communicative and sociolinguistic abilities.

In order to understand if students achieved the objectives of the translation courses, the results should be analysed from different perspectives. Although the use of the Rich Points is an excellent tool to analyse the level of competence, my study presented some limitations since it could not include all the translation problems that students encountered. The reasons are manifold: errors and mistranslations covered several parts of the source texts and the limitation of time and space of my study could not enable to analyse all of them in detail, some errors were related to poor knowledge of L1, some of them have no statistical value since they were made by an insignificant part of the sample. In order to capture the whole frame, the results obtained by V1 have been compared to the one obtained by V2. Therefore, the ‘acceptability’ index of the Rich Points at the beginning of the second year and the end of the third year have been compared to the final marks obtained by students in their final exams. For this purpose, the results obtained from several source texts of the second- and third- year final exams have been grouped together in order to have a general overall view.

The outcomes of the second year have been grouped, as follows:

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Cpo	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Sde	3	2	1	3	2	3	3	3
Afi	1	3	1	1	1	3	3	3
Jci	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
Vda	1	2	1	1	3	3	2	3
Mbi	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Mfr	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3
Aan	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	1
Ebo	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	1
Lgr	2	3	1	2	3	2	1	1
Lzo	1	3	1	2	3	3	2	3
Ssc	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Lda	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	2
Fca	3	3	1	2	2	3	2	3
Cae	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2
Mba	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1
Cco	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	2
Gso	1	3	3	1	3	3	3	1
Mbe	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3
Oco	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	3
Eca	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	3
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>2.23</b>	<b>2.28</b>

Table 23: Acceptability index of second-year final exams.

In order to read the data more easily, the Rich Points (a, b) have been grouped together:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
RP1	2.02
RP2	1.64
RP3	2.19
RP4	2.25

Table 24: Mean values of second-year final translation.

The final marks of the second-year students are shown in the table below:

<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>MARKS</b>
Gso	29
Mbe	28
Eca	29
Oco	28
Aan	26
Ebo	25
Lgr	26
Lzo	29
Ssc	29
Lda	29
Fca	25
Cae	25
Cpo	28
Sde	26
Afi	26
Jci	28
Vda	27
Mba	28
Mbi	27
Cco	28
Mfr	26
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>27.23</b>

**Table 25: Final marks of second-year EN>IT translation.**

Likewise, the results of the ‘acceptability’ index of the final exams of third-year students have been summarized in the following table:

Students	RP1a	RP1b	RP2a	RP2b	RP3a	RP3b	RP4a	RP4b
Ssc	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	1
Cpo	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
Vda	3	1	2	3	1	3	2	3
Mba	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	2
Mbi	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	2
Mfr	2	1	3	3	2	3	3	1
Gso	1	1	3	1	2	2	3	2
Mbe	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2

Oco	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	1
Lzo	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	3
Lda	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	1
Sde	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	2
Afi	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	1
Jci	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	3
Eca	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	2
Aan	2	3	3	1	2	2	1	3
Ebo	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	1
Fca	1	3	2	3	2	1	2	3
Cae	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	3
Cco	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	3
Lgr	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	3
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>2.23</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>2.14</b>

Table 26: Acceptability index of third-year final exams.

In order to read these data more clearly, each Rich Point (a,b) has been grouped together:

<b>RICH POINT</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
RP1	1.92
RP2	2.16
RP3	1.73
RP4	2.25

Table 27: Mean values of third-year exams.

The marks of the third-year final exams obtained by students are shown in the table below:

<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>MARKS</b>
Gso	29
Mbe	20
Eca	23
Oco	30
Aan	27
Ebo	24
Lgr	21



Lzo	27
Ssc	27
Lda	28
Fca	25
Cae	23
Cpo	27
Sde	26
Vda	25
Mba	28
Mbi	24
Cco	25
Mfr	24
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>25.42</b>

**Table 28: Final marks of third-year exams.**

In general, the students' performance was quite satisfactory. The level of translation competence increased consistently throughout the second and third year. Nevertheless, the 'acceptability' index tables did not show excellent average scores, as the initial level of students' competence was quite low, the final outcomes could not be described as a miraculous improvement. However, it should be pointed out that, despite some changes over time, the growth in competence level has been quite constant and gradually rising among the students.

The difference between the mean obtained by students in their final exams of the second and third year could be explained by the fact that tourist and promotional texts present an increasing level of difficulty. However, the overall translation products turned out to be of a good quality since the gap between second-year and third-year scores was not that marked: 27.23 against 25.42.

There might be several reasons for these slightly decreasing 'acceptability' values, since translation competence is also influenced by several factors. First of all, the students' prior knowledge and experience, personal and interpersonal abilities, motivation, ambitions, learning style and personal characteristics all influenced the development of translation competence. Second of all, as pointed out before, the type of degree that students decide to undertake is also essential. My statistical population were students of the undergraduate course of *Mediazione linguistica e culturale*, therefore translation activities were only a small part of their curriculum and consequently the

exposure to translation was limited to some hours per week and in one semester per year. Hence, swinging results and little improvements have to be considered in the light of this overall picture.

## Conclusions

The notion of translation and the debate about its nature have been long discussed within academia. The interrelation of TS with several disciplines such as Linguistics, Literature, Psychology has generated different definitions and approaches to translation and consequently numerous methods and models have been created.

The long absence of translation in language classes has to be related to the history of language learning theories which outlawed it from foreign language didactics. One of the greatest damage done to translation was inflicted by the Grammar-Translation method since it isolated language from real life communication. Moreover, the use of English as *lingua franca* and the origin of Communicative Approach underlined the importance of oral communication over written texts.

The increasing interest for translation as a learning tool is the result of new trends in Translation Studies. The approach to translation is now oriented towards micro- and macro- text analysis with attention for elements such as Skopos, functions and pragmatic accuracy. At the early stage, TS had focused on literary and technical texts, while in the last decades other types and genres have been introduced in foreign language teaching education. For instance, tourist and promotional texts are now recognized to be suitable materials which can develop and improve students' translation competence. Some of the reasons which render them perfect for beginners and intermediate language students are the accessibility of the subject area and the graded difficulty of the texts selected.

The notion of translation competence has been analyzed by different perspectives. The lack of homogeneity in its definition and models used is the reflection of the interdisciplinary nature of Translation Studies. The empirical approach to translation competence has been influenced by the increasing interest in the observation of the translation practice of professionals and students. The possibility of testing and reformulating the models proposed through empirical research is one of the important methodological revolution of the Translation Studies. For the purpose of this study, the model proposed by PACTE was considered the most suitable for several reasons: it is the

longest longitudinal study on TC conducted so far, the model has been tested empirically on the basis of the exploratory studies and pilot tests carried out prior to the experiments, and the definition of TC is centered on the translation itself rather than on other competences required by professional markets.

For the purpose of my research, the model has been adapted to my sample since it focuses on the analysis of the quality of the product and it does only involve undergraduate language students. Translation has to be considered in a wider context because it is considered as an instrument for the acquisition of language proficiency.

Quality has been evaluated on the basis of some Rich Points which represent problematic parts of the texts that had to be solved by the application of adequate strategies. They have been grouped into four categories: culture and pragmatics, lexis and semantics, syntax and figurative use of the language. The results obtained have been compared to two dependent variables and two statistical indexes: mean and variance.

At the beginning of the second year, students did not possess a sufficient level of translation competence. In particular, the most challenging category was the one related to culture and pragmatics. These low values can be explained by the fact that students, during their first year of University, focused the attention to linguistic, syntactical and grammatical characteristics of English. Culture and pragmatics are learned by practice and they are not influenced by language proficiency. Therefore, the knowledge of the different norms and conventions which regulate written communication are essential for the development of this macro-area.

At the end of the third year, the results obtained show that translation competence had improved throughout the bachelor degree and that it has been influenced by cooperative learning and team work. The category in which students performed well was the one related to the figurative use of language, while the area which turned out to be the most challenging was the syntactic one. Data highlight swinging levels reached by students between the end of second year and the beginning of the third year. This can be explained by the fact that there is a gap of six months between the two translation courses. Moreover, these values show that practice and exposure to translation are crucial factors for improvements in translation competence.

However, despite the slight improvements, it should be noticed that the level of competence achieved, at the end of the third year, was not adequate for an undergraduate student. At the same time, it should be taken into account that objectives of the *Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale* degree course is not to form professional translators, therefore exposure to translation cannot be compared to the one received by students of Interpreters and Translators degree courses. Consequently, the level of TC of my sample was not expected to be excellent, considering that translation courses have a duration of six months.

At the end of the final year, students should have the capacity to analyse texts at macro- ( functions and genre) and micro- (lexis and grammar) level, to produce target texts with an adequate linguistic, syntactic and lexical accuracy. In general, the outcomes achieved by students are quite satisfactory. The level of TC has increased constantly throughout the second and third year at university, even though the level reached is quite low. Numerous reasons can play a role in the slight swings in translation competence achieved. First of all, prior knowledge and experience, ambitions, learning style and motivation all influence the development of TC. Second, the type of degree course can affect the overall performance, as in our case translation is not an end, but rather a means through which language proficiency is acquired. Hence, oscillatory results and little improvements have to be considered in the light of this overall picture.

## RIASSUNTO

Il termine “traduzione” deriva dal verbo latino *transferre* che significa trasportare. Il concetto che non sempre il trasferimento è possibile è insisto nel termine stesso. Di fatti, poiché la parola traduzione implica una possibile perdita di significato, alcuni studiosi hanno preferito usare il termine “equivalenza”. Questo cambio terminologico non ha risolto la spinosa questione sulla natura del fenomeno. Infatti, non ci sono pareri univoci su cosa possa essere definito o meno traduzione. Questa discrepanza di opinioni non è una questione di poco conto: solo definendo la sua natura, è possibile costituire una scienza solida che sia in grado di spiegare i meccanismi che operano all’interno di una lingua. Di conseguenza, la storia della didattica della traduzione è stata influenzata dalla nascita e gli sviluppi della scienza traduttologica.

La traduzione è stata assente, per lungo periodo, dalla didattica poiché si riteneva non sviluppasse l’apprendimento linguistico a causa dell’interferenza con la lingua madre. Inoltre, l’utilizzo dell’inglese come lingua franca e la nascita dell’approccio comunicativo diedero maggiore importanza alla lingua parlata piuttosto che a quella scritta. Il cambiamento di prospettiva che vedeva il testo come un atto di comunicazione interculturale ha portato alla rivalutazione dell’importanza della traduzione. Numerosi studi sottolineano il ruolo centrale che ricopre all’interno dell’insegnamento linguistico.

La nozione di competenza traduttiva è stata analizzata da prospettive diverse e la mancanza di omogeneità nella definizione è il frutto della natura interdisciplinare della traduttologia. Nonostante non vi siano solide ricerche empiriche sull’argomento, essa può essere utilizzata come un fondamentale strumento didattico in quanto può aiutare a sviluppare modelli psicologici del processo traduttivo, può essere usata per insegnare a tradurre e può servire come strumento di valutazione del prodotto finale.

In generale, il concetto di competenza ha subito diversi cambiamenti: da quello linguistico all’approccio cognitivo e costruttivista degli anni ’80 e ’90, fino a una nuova prospettiva che è stata influenzata dalla tecnologia e dall’interesse crescente verso i bisogni del mondo professionale.

Il primo studioso che ha contrapposto il concetto di competenza a quello di performance è stato il linguista Chomsky. Il primo corrisponde alla conoscenza del sistema linguistico, mentre il secondo si riferisce al modo in cui la lingua viene usata nel contesto comunicativo. Secondo questi approcci linguistici, la competenza traduttiva e quella linguistica sono coincidenti. Le persone bilingui erano considerate traduttori naturali, la cui competenza traduttiva si sviluppava solo attraverso l'acquisizione di due o più lingue coinvolte nel processo. Questa idea basata sull'innatismo fu, però, presto confutata da numerosi studi effettuati sulla qualità del prodotto realizzato dai bilingue.

L'interesse verso i meccanismi linguistici e psicologici del processo hanno cambiato il modo in cui la traduzione viene percepita. Con lo sviluppo dell'approccio cognitivo e funzionalista, l'attenzione infatti si sposta dal prodotto al traduttore e alle caratteristiche e processi mentali coinvolti nel processo. In questo periodo nascono diversi metodi e strumenti che hanno lo scopo di registrare e capire cosa avviene nella mente del traduttore durante la traduzione. In questo modo, il concetto di competenza coincide con quello di conoscenza specialistica.

L'influenza della tecnologia, lo sviluppo di diversi software di traduzione e l'evoluzione della professione hanno modificato le abilità richieste in questo ambito professionale. Al giorno d'oggi i traduttori svolgono un ruolo cruciale nella buona riuscita delle trattative commerciali, le operazioni mediche e legali. Le sole capacità linguistiche e traduttive non sono sufficienti per essere un buon traduttore professionista.

All'interno del mondo accademico, non esiste una definizione condivisa sulla natura della competenza traduttiva. Questa disomogeneità è evidente dalle numerose ed eterogenee definizioni e modelli esistenti. Nonostante non ci sia concordanza su quali sotto-competenze facciano parte dell'abilità traduttiva, tutti i modelli proposti sono multi-componentziali. Allo stesso tempo però come puntalizzato da Kiraly queste relazioni tra abilità e capacità che devono essere possedute al momento della traduzione sembrano delle rappresentazioni idealizzate e statiche. Di fatti, sono pochi gli studi che si focalizzano sulla dinamicità del processo e che sono stati verificati empiricamente. Tra questi, vi sono i modelli di Campbell, TransComp e PACTE. Quest'ultimo costituirà la base teorica della presente analisi.

Lo scopo della ricerca è misurare lo sviluppo della competenza traduttiva da parte degli studenti del secondo e terzo anno del corso di laurea triennale "Mediazione

linguistica e culturale” dell’Università di Padova. Il sopracitato corso viene istituito nel 1999 all’interno della riforma universitaria italiana e prepara alla formazione di diverse figure istituzionali come interpreti, traduttori, esperti linguistici all’interno di contesti multiculturali e internazionali.

Il programma del corso prevede lo studio di due lingue e di altre materie in campo economico, storico, letterario. In questo modo, i laureati sono in grado di acquisire una serie di abilità e conoscenze che rispecchiano l’ampio ambito in cui una lingua è inserita. Infatti, per essere dei buoni mediatori, bisogna possedere diverse capacità che integrano quelle linguistiche: consapevolezza metalinguistica, conoscenza delle caratteristiche strutturali delle lingue studiate e una conoscenza di base in vari settori come quello economici, legale e antropologico. Gli studenti che decidono di studiare inglese come prima o seconda lingua devono seguire numerosi moduli che vanno dalla linguistica di base alla traduzione dall’italiano all’inglese e viceversa. Inoltre, durante il primo anno i corsi di traduzione non sono presenti poiché per sapere tradurre è necessaria una competenza linguistica sufficientemente elevata.

Il curriculum dei corsi di traduzione dall’inglese all’italiano presenta diversi punti che rivestono un ruolo cruciale nell’acquisizione della competenza traduttiva. Prima di tutto, gli studenti sono incoraggiati a sviluppare le proprie capacità attraverso la pratica e l’esposizione alla traduzione. Di fatti, gli studenti sono divisi in gruppi di 3 o 4 persone e sono tenuti a discutere i problemi traduttivi e a scegliere insieme la migliore strategia traduttiva da adottare. Inoltre, l’insegnante riveste il ruolo di facilitatore, di guida, di risorsa per il miglioramento del processo di apprendimento e non è più visto come depositario della verità. Inoltre la stimolazione dell’interazione tra i membri del gruppo permette una maggiore riflessione metalinguistica. La conoscenza e la competenza vengono, quindi, costruite attraverso il dialogo e la partecipazione attiva all’interno della classe. Inoltre, nei corsi di traduzione dall’inglese all’italiano, sono stati selezionati testi turistici e promozionali come materiale didattico. I benefici di utilizzare testi autentici, di difficoltà graduale e di facile accessibilità sono stati dimostrati da diversi studi. Gli studenti triennali non hanno familiarità con i testi altamente specializzati o tecnici, per questo i testi turistici sono considerati degli ottimi generi da usare all’inizio del percorso di traduzione. Inoltre, poiché la motivazione è una caratteristica cruciale per l’acquisizione della competenza, l’uso di testi che riflettono il livello di conoscenza



linguistica degli studenti consente loro di non demotivarsi a causa di testi troppo facili o troppo difficili rispetto alle loro abilità.

L'utilizzo di testi appartenenti a generi diversi permette di ottenere informazioni riguardo la situazione comunicativa, la relazione tra i soggetti coinvolti e lo scopo dell'atto comunicativo. Allo stesso tempo, il riconoscimento delle caratteristiche specifiche di un determinato genere consentono di acquisire le norme, i comportamenti e i valori del testo di partenza. Solo in questo modo, è possibile trasferire lo stesso significato dal testo originale al testo di arrivo. Dal punto di vista formale, attraverso il genere gli studenti acquisiscono gli schemi adeguati da seguire all'interno di quella determinata cultura, per esempio l'uso della fraseologia, il grado di formalità di un testo, la modalità. Può servire anche a consolidare altre abilità come l'acquisizione di una conoscenza di base delle discipline alle quali appartiene il genere studiato e la comprensione di testi di diversa natura. Dunque, il genere può essere considerato uno strumento educativo che permette di migliorare la competenza comunicativa, traduttiva o altri tipi di abilità come la scrittura o la revisione e correzione dei testi.

La presente ricerca utilizza un approccio traduttivo orientato alla qualità del prodotto. La capacità traduttiva degli studenti è misurata tramite l'analisi delle traduzioni scritte effettuate durante il secondo e terzo anno di università. Per questo studio, il modello del gruppo PACTE è stato preso in considerazione per diversi motivi: è il più lungo studio longitudinale realizzato finora, il modello è stato modificato sulla base dei risultati empirici ottenuti, la definizione di competenza si focalizza sul processo traduttivo stesso e non sulle abilità relative al campo professionale.

PACTE è un gruppo di ricerca dell'università di Barcellona che ha concentrato la sua analisi sull'acquisizione, lo sviluppo e la valutazione della competenza traduttiva di testi scritti sulla base dell'indice di accettabilità, con lo scopo di migliorare la didattica della traduzione e di istituire un curriculum adeguato alla formazione di traduttori professionisti. Il loro modello è formato da cinque sotto-competenze: bilingue, extra linguistica, conoscenza della traduzione, strumentale, psicologica e strategica. Quest'ultima include l'abilità di prendere decisione e risolvere i problemi traduttivi presenti nei testi. Essa interagisce con tutte le altre competenze secondo un sistema di relazione gerarchico.

Per lo scopo della ricerca, il modello è stato adattato al mio campione poiché l'analisi si concentra solo sulla qualità del prodotto finale e non coinvolge professori di lingua o traduttori ma studenti triennali. La traduzione deve essere, dunque, considerata in un contesto più ampio perché è solo uno strumento per acquisire la competenza linguistica. Per questo motivo, solo le abilità bilingue, strumentale, strategica e conoscenza della traduzione vengono prese in esame.

La qualità della traduzione è stata valutata sulla base di alcuni Rich Points che rappresentano parti problematiche dei testi selezionati e che devono essere risolte tramite l'applicazione di strategie adeguate. Inoltre la selezione di alcune parti del testo permette un'analisi e un confronto di dati più semplice e lineare. I rich point selezionati sono stati raggruppati in quattro categorie: cultura e pragmatica, lessico e semantica, sintassi e uso metaforico e figurato della lingua. La scelta è stata influenzata da diversi fattori quali la mia esperienza personale come studentessa, i risultati ottenuti da vari studi condotti sull'argomento e i problemi e le caratteristiche dei testi studiati durante i corsi di "lingua e traduzione inglese".

Il campione è stato valutato quattro volte nel corso del loro percorso accademico: all'inizio e alla fine del secondo e del terzo anno. Gli studenti analizzati sono stati 21 sia per limiti di spazio e tempo, sia per la difficoltà di reperire un numero più alto poiché molti studenti non hanno seguito entrambe le attività di traduzione nei due anni considerati. Inoltre, la scelta della popolazione statistica è stata influenzata da un altro fattore: solo gli studenti la cui votazione era uguale o superiore a 25 sono stati presi in considerazione.

I 'Rich Points' dovevano soddisfare tre criteri per essere considerati accettabili: il significato del testo di partenza doveva essere comunicato in modo efficace; il testo di arrivo doveva soddisfare le aspettative del lettore, le norme relative al genere testuale; la lingua utilizzata doveva essere corretta e adeguata al contesto comunicativo.

Questi criteri sono stati utilizzati per determinare se una soluzione fosse da considerare:

- accettabile: se tutte le connotazioni rilevanti del testo di partenza sono state attivate in relazione al significato, la funzione del testo e la lingua utilizzata.

- semi-accettabile: se la coerenza con il testo originale viene mantenuta e alcune delle connotazioni del testo di partenza sono presenti.
- Inaccettabile: se la traduzione non è coerente con il testo originale e se nessuna connotazione del testo di partenza viene rilevata.

Ad ogni soluzione è stato assegnato un giudizio tra 1 e 3, a seconda de la soluzione fosse ritenuta accettabile, semi-accettabile o inaccettabile.

I risultati ottenuti sono stati messi in relazione con due variabili dipendenti e con due indici di analisi statistici: la media e la varianza. Le variabili individuate indicano il grado di consapevolezza raggiunto dal campione nella traduzione e i miglioramenti ottenuti in L2. La media si riferisce alla al valore centrale di una serie di numeri ed è calcolata sommando tutti i valori a disposizione e dividendo il risultato per il numero complessivo dei dati. La varianza, invece, analizza la variabilità di un certo fenomeno. Essa misura il livello di dispersione intorno al valore medio. Una varianza elevata indica che i dati ottenuti sono eterogenei; più il valore della varianza sarà vicino allo zero, tanto più i risultati saranno omogenei tra di loro. Questi indici permettono di misurare se la competenza traduttiva raggiunta dagli studenti sia omogenea o se ci sono delle differenze significative dei livelli di abilità ottenuti.

Data l'impossibilità di presentare i risultati ottenuti per ogni testo, verranno discussi solo i risultati ottenuti in base alle cinque domande che sono state poste all'inizio della ricerca. Inoltre una discussione generale consente di ottenere una valutazione più oggettiva.

*1. All'inizio del secondo anno, quali categorie dovevano essere migliorate e quali aree non presentavano particolari problemi traduttivi?*

All'inizio del secondo anno gli studenti si sono avvicinati alla traduzione per la prima volta e la loro capacità di riflettere sulla lingua metalinguisticamente non era ancora sviluppata, come è stato dimostrato dall'indice di accettabilità. Si stimava che i valori ottenuti fossero bassi ed omogenei.

Come previsto, in nessuna categoria la media ha raggiunto il valore di 2. Il valore della varianza, invece, ha mostrato dei risultati leggermente migliori di quelli attesi. Di fatti, un punteggio di 0,50 indica che il livello raggiunto dagli studenti era abbastanza eterogeneo. Nel nostro caso, la categoria più omogenea è quella relativa all'uso figurato della lingua, invece il più eterogeneo è stato il settore sintattico.

Gli studenti avevano bisogno di migliorare in tutte le macro-aree selezionate poiché un indice inferiore a 2 è considerato un valore non sufficiente per sviluppare la abilità richieste. In particolare, le maggiore difficoltà sono state riscontrate in cultura e pragmatica. Questo risultato può essere spiegato dal fatto che dal primo anno di università la popolazione selezionata studia le caratteristiche linguistiche, sintattiche, grammaticali e strutturali della lingua inglese. Questo consente di riflettere sulle particolarità della propria lingua madre. Di conseguenza, la cultura e la pragmatica vengono acquisite tramite la pratica e l'immersione nella L2. L'analisi linguistica non fa conoscere e capire le differenze culturali. Quindi, la conoscenza delle diverse norme e convenzioni che regolano la comunicazione scritta sono essenziali per lo sviluppo di questa categoria.

## *2. Hanno la pratica e l'esposizione alla traduzione migliorato la competenza traduttiva durante il secondo e terzo anno di università?*

I corsi di traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano si basavano sulla cooperazione tra i membri dei gruppi in cui gli studenti venivano divisi all'inizio del semestre. La possibilità di riflettere sulle discrepanze tra L1 e L2 dovrebbe sviluppare la consapevolezza metalinguistica. Per analizzare se l'esposizione alla traduzione e la pratica hanno migliorato le competenze traduttive degli studenti, sono stati messi in relazione i risultati ottenuti all'inizio e alla fine di ogni anno accademico.

Per quanto riguarda il secondo anno, l'indice di accettabilità è cresciuto considerevolmente. Di conseguenza, ci sono registrati miglioramenti in quasi tutte le categorie, ad eccezione dell'area relativa al lessico e la semantica. Se paragoniamo la velocità con cui i valori sono cresciuti nelle altre aree, la diminuzione dei valori di RP2 sono significativi. I valori della varianza mostrano che il livello di competenza non è stato stabile. Infatti, i risultati ottenuti dal campione sono variabili e incostanti. Se

consideriamo tutti i dati nell'insieme, possiamo constatare una diretta correlazione tra l'indice di accettabilità e la varianza: al variare dell'uno, variava anche l'altro.

Per quanto riguarda il terzo anno, se paragoniamo i dati, la capacità di risolvere i problemi traduttivi è migliorata significativamente in tutte le categorie, ad eccezione di quella relativa all'uso figurato del linguaggio che ha registrato un peggioramento di 0,30. Invece, la varianza indica che l'omogeneità tra il campione è leggermente aumentata. Dunque, nonostante qualche peggioramento, il livello di competenza raggiunto è abbastanza uniforme. I risultati ottenuti sono incoraggianti, poiché non è stata riscontrata nessuna correlazione diretta tra l'indice di accettabilità e quello di varianza. La correlazione indiretta tra i due valori indica che i miglioramenti sono stati condivisi dalla quasi totalità degli studenti. Tuttavia, una correlazione diretta è stata registrata nella categoria dell'uso figurato della lingua: al crescere della media, il valore della varianza è cresciuto.

In conclusione, i risultati ottenuti dimostrano che la competenza traduttiva è migliorata nel tempo e che è stata influenzata dall'apprendimento collaborativo.

### 3. *In quale categoria gli studenti hanno ottenuto i risultati migliori?*

L'attività traduttiva è un fenomeno complesso che include una serie di sotto-competenze relazionate tra di loro. Per valutare l'andamento dei risultati della popolazione statistica, l'indice di accettabilità dell'inizio e della fine del secondo e del terzo anno sono stati messi a paragone.

I dati ottenuti non indicano dei valori incoraggianti. Infatti, in tutte le categorie si sono registrati piccoli miglioramenti o il livello di competenza è rimasto costante. Se analizziamo i valori ottenuti in ciascuna categoria, è possibile determinare l'area che ha ottenuto i risultati migliori:

- RP1: la media non si attesta su valori costanti ma è cresciuta e diminuita in diversi momenti. La varianza, invece, indica che il livello di omogeneità è stato piuttosto uniforme.
- RP2: ha prodotto risultati contraddittori. Di fatti, nonostante una diminuzione costante tra l'inizio del secondo anno e del terzo anno, alla fine del terzo anno

il valore è cresciuto di 0,30. Inoltre, l'indice di varianza ha mostrato un lieve peggioramento durante il secondo anno, e un miglioramento durante il terzo anno.

- RP3: dall'inizio del secondo anno alla fine del terzo anno, un leggero miglioramento è stato registrato, nonostante numerose oscillazioni durante tutto il periodo considerato. Tuttavia, la varianza indica che il livello di competenza era abbastanza omogeneo.
- RP4: è stata l'unica categoria in cui si è registrato un aumento dei valori in modo costante. Tuttavia, alla fine del terzo anno la media dell'indice di accettabilità è diminuita leggermente. Per quanto riguarda la varianza, l'indice di omogeneità è rimasto quasi immobile e costante nel tempo.

In generale, l'area in cui gli studenti hanno raggiunto i risultati migliori è stata quella relativa all'uso figurativo della lingua, invece la categoria che si è dimostrata la più problematica per gli studenti è stata quella sintattica.

I dati hanno mostrato un'oscillazione dell'andamento degli studenti tra la fine del secondo anno e l'inizio del terzo anno. Questo potrebbe essere collegato al fatto che i corsi di traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano erano solo semestrali con un intervallo di sei mesi dalla fine di uno e l'inizio dell'altro. Ancora una volta, questi risultati sottolineano l'importanza che la pratica riveste nello sviluppo della competenza traduttiva.

#### *4. Sono migliorati gli studenti nella traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano durante il corso di laurea triennale?*

Per rispondere a questa domanda, i valori dell'indice di accettabilità tra l'inizio del secondo anno e la fine del terzo sono stati messi in relazione.

I valori ottenuti mostrano un notevole miglioramento del valore della media in ognuna delle quattro categorie selezionate. I successi migliori si sono registrati nella area relativa alla cultura e la pragmatica. Infatti, l'indice di accettabilità è cresciuta di 0,76 e la varianza si è attestata su valori costanti. Nonostante i miglioramenti ottenuti, bisogna sottolineare che il livello di competenza raggiunto dagli studenti alla fine del corso di laurea triennale in "Mediazione linguistica e culturale" è abbastanza basso e inadeguato

per uno studente laureato. Per quanto riguarda la quarta categoria, sebbene miglioramenti significativi sono stati ottenuti, l'indice di varianza dimostra che c'è una differenza notevole tra gli studenti con un'elevata e bassa competenza. Un sufficiente aumento della abilità traduttiva è stato notato nel lessico e nella semantica. La macro area in cui gli studenti hanno ottenuto i peggiori valori è stata la sintassi, con un miglioramento di appena 0,07. Per quanto concerne la categoria culturale e pragmatica, i valori ottenuti sono stati più bassi del previsto e il livello raggiunto non risulta adeguato alla competenza linguistica di livello C1 che gli studenti dovrebbero possedere alla fine del terzo anno.

5. *Gli studenti hanno raggiunto gli obiettivi del loro corso di studio? Sono in grado di tradurre testi turistici e promozionali?*

Alla fine del terzo anno, gli studenti dovrebbero essere in grado di analizzare i testi ad un macro (funzione e genere) e micro (lessico e grammatica) livello, di produrre testi di arrivo con un'adeguata precisione linguistica, sintattica e lessicale. La capacità traduttiva dovrebbe includere le seguenti sotto-competenze: bilingue, conoscenza della traduzione, strumentale e strategica. Bisogna tenere conto del fatto che l'esposizione alla traduzione degli studenti di mediazione non può essere paragonata a quella raggiunta in una scuola di interpreti e traduttori, dove l'obiettivo è quello di formare futuri professionisti. Di conseguenza, non ci si può aspettare che il livello raggiunto dagli studenti di "Mediazione linguistica e culturale" sia eccellente, considerando anche che i corsi di traduzione hanno durata semestrale.

Per analizzare quali risultati sono stati raggiunti dal campione, i valori sono stati analizzati da prospettive diverse. L'uso dei Rich Points nella mia ricerca presenta delle limitazioni in quanto non tutti gli errori e le traduzioni sbagliate sono state coperte dall'analisi, poiché molti errori non erano rappresentati di una determinata categoria ma erano piuttosto attribuibili ai singoli soggetti. Per questa ragione, anche i voti ottenuti in traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano della fine del secondo e terzo anno sono stati analizzati e messi a paragone con i risultati dell'indice di accettabilità.

In generale, la prestazione del campione è stata abbastanza soddisfacente. Infatti, il livello di competenza traduttiva è cresciuto durante il corso di laurea triennale con costanza. Tuttavia, come dimostrato dai bassi valori ottenuti all'inizio del secondo

anno, i valori di accettabilità della fine del terzo anno non hanno mostrato miglioramenti miracolosi, attestandosi su livelli medio-bassi.

La differenza di circa 2 punti tra i voti finali del secondo e terzo anno può essere relazionata alla maggiore difficoltà presentata dai testi promozionali rispetto a quelli turistici. Tuttavia, la lieve differenza indica che i prodotti finali realizzati dagli studenti sono di buona qualità.

Ci possono essere diversi fattori che giocano un ruolo nell'andamento lievemente oscillatorio del livello di competenza raggiunto. Prima di tutto, la previa conoscenza e esperienza degli studenti, così come le capacità personali e interpersonali, la motivazione, le ambizioni e lo stile di apprendimento influenzano lo sviluppo dell'abilità traduttiva. Un'altra causa potrebbe essere rappresentata dal tipo di corso di laurea intrapreso dagli studenti poiché la traduzione non è considerata un fine ma piuttosto come uno strumento che può favorire lo sviluppo della competenza linguistica. Di conseguenza, risultati oscillatori e lievi miglioramenti devono essere valutati alla luce di tutte queste caratteristiche.



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