

Redefining Translation Competence in an Electronic Age. In Defence of a Minimalist Approach

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Anthony Pym

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Abstract

Since the 1970s the notion of “translation competence” has been viewed as at least 1) a mode of bilingualism, open to linguistic analysis, 2) a question of market demands, given to extreme historical and social change, 3) a multicomponent competence, involving sets of skills that are linguistic, cultural, technological and professional, and 4) a “supercompetence” that would somehow stand above the rest. The general trend among theorists has been to expand the multicomponent model so as to bring new skills and proficiencies into the field of translator training. This trend may be expected to continue with the increasing use of electronic tools. Here it is argued, however, that the multicomponential expansions of competence are partly grounded in institutional interests and are conceptually flawed in that they will always be one or two steps behind market demands. On the other hand, a simple minimalist concept of translation competence, based on the production then elimination of alternatives, can help orient translator training in times of rapid technological and professional change.

Keywords : translation competence, translator training, translation process,

Résumé

La compétence traductionnelle a été conceptualisée comme étant 1) une modalité du bilinguisme, donc sujet à l'analyse linguistique, 2) un effet des demandes du marché, donc sujet à un fort relativisme historique et social, 3) une compétence pluricomponentielle, donc sujet à une approche interdisciplinaire à la fois linguistique, culturelle, technologique et professionnelle, et 4) une vague « hypercompétence » qui en quelque sorte transcenderait tout le reste. La tendance générale depuis les années 1970 a été d'élargir le modèle pluricomponentiel en sorte que l'on ajoute constamment des habiletés nouvelles au champ de la formation des traducteurs. Cette tendance a toutes les chances de se répandre encore, grâce en premier lieu à l'emploi croissant des outils électroniques. On est en droit de se demander, pourtant, si les élargissements du modèle pluricomponentiel ne répondent pas en partie aux intérêts propres aux institutions qui prétendent former les traducteurs. D'ailleurs, un tel modèle serait à jamais en quête d'un marché qui s'élargit plus vite que lui. Plus satisfaisant nous semble une conceptualisation minimaliste de la compétence traductionnelle, basée celle-ci sur la production puis triage des variantes. Grâce à sa simplicité même, ce genre de compétence pourrait nous aider à orienter la formation des traducteurs, malgré toutes les turbulences technologiques et professionnelles.

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