



Designing a Model of ICC Development for Translation-Oriented Language Education: Preparing Trainee Translators to Become Intercultural Mediators

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Abstract: This article proposes the need for a re-think of the trainee-translator classroom, advocating for a combined approach to translator training, integrating linguistic skill development (translation competence) and broader interpersonal and contextual understanding (translator competence). Focusing on undergraduate BA programmes, the paper reviews the role of languages in translation education, the concept of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), and the need for stronger Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) integration. It considers various models of translator training that focus on different aspects, such as language contrasts, professional context, and interpersonal skills, all of which are essential for comprehensive translator education. However, recognising the diversity of translation curricula worldwide and the complexity of translation in a globalised world, the proposed model also aims to provide a flexible, systematic approach to developing professional intercultural mediators who can take informed and responsible decisions when faced with complex linguistic and cultural challenges. The model we propose serves as a guide for curriculum development, promoting reflection on overarching aims and outcomes in translation training programmes, and recognising the role of translators not just as language experts but as active mediators who bring their unique perspectives to their work.

Keywords: *translator training, languages for specific purposes, intercultural communicative competence, translation competence, mediation.*

Diseño de un modelo de desarrollo de la CCI para clases de lengua aplicada a la traducción, o cómo preparar a los traductores en formación para la mediación intercultural

Resumen: Este artículo replantea la formación de traductores y aboga por un enfoque que integre el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas (competencia traductora) y una comprensión interpersonal y contextual más amplia (competencia del traductor). Centrándose en los programas de Grado, el artículo revisa el papel de los idiomas en los estudios de traducción, el concepto de Lenguas con Fines Específicos (LFE), y la necesidad de una mayor integración de la Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI). Considera varios modelos de formación que se enfocan en aspectos como contrastividad lingüística, contexto profesional y habilidades interpersonales, todos esenciales para una preparación integral de los futuros profesionales. También reconoce la diversidad de los planes de estudio en el mundo y la complejidad de la traducción en un mundo globalizado, y propone un modelo con un enfoque flexible y sistemático para la formación de los futuros mediadores interculturales, con el objetivo de ayudarles a tomar decisiones informadas y responsables cuando se enfrenten a desafíos lingüísticos y culturales complejos. Este modelo sirve de guía para el desarrollo curricular, promueve una reflexión sobre objetivos y resultados en los estudios de traducción, y reconoce el papel del traductor como experto en idiomas y mediador activo con sus perspectivas únicas.

Palabras clave: *formación de traductores, lenguas con fines específicos, competencia comunicativa intercultural, competencia traductora, mediación.*

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1. Introduction

The field of translation studies has developed considerably in recent years, broadening out its scope well beyond the traditional focus on the binaries of source and target text approaches foregrounding text production. The cultural turn, together with the proliferation of hybrid and/or transcreated texts (where *source* and *target* lose their meaning) have helped to shift the focus from the text to the translator; the emphasis in the last decade on translator decision-making (Munday, 2012; Zhang & Munday, 2018) has highlighted the importance of translator training.

Such training can take a range of approaches, and excellent overview translator training is offered in Anthony Pym (2003, p. 483), who differentiates between translator ‘training’ – focusing more on linguistic skills development (labelled translation competence) – and translator ‘education’ focusing more on the interpersonal skills and attitudes required for a translator to understand the context, broader sociolinguistic and industry-related context to enable them to become self-determined translation professionals (translator competence).

This article proposes that it is not necessarily an either/or approach, but advocates the combining of a *translation/translator* focus; we do this drawing upon insights from both Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and from Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), whose contributions to translator training have not – we feel – been fully explored to date. We propose a model for how these areas could benefit more systematically the development of translators within a higher education context. The model is developed from both authors’ theoretical research in Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication, and additionally informed by educational practice with Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. Our aim is to provide a theoretical framework that can serve as a practical foundation for educators working to prepare translators as intercultural mediators. Furthermore, given our work starts from the understanding of how courses in translation are typically taught in higher education (namely with a historical focus on linguistic proficiency) our work addresses ways in which work on languages for specific purposes help to frame our proposed model.

The translation profession has been changing rapidly through advances in AI assisted technology, which has called into question the content, function and intended outcomes of translator training programmes, in addition to questioning the ‘ego’ of the translator as working independently from their AI/machine support (Lee, 2024). The authors of this article recognise the implications of a posthumanist shift in translation studies, which – although not the focus of this article – strengthens our argument for a stronger focus on the translator in terms of personal attributes often understood as intercultural communication rather than translation. Cao et al. (2025), in a systematic review of intercultural competence in translator education, note that there is still a lack of “future research [which] should give priority to the development of ‘systematic models that integrate intercultural competence into translation education” (p. 14). This article will offer a review of models which have sought to combine these two fields.

The way in which translation and translator training are justified within translation programmes within higher education can depend on a number of contextual factors, such as length or level of study programme (e.g., translation studies within a 4-year BA programme, or as specialist training at Masters' level). While we recognise that models of translator training/education differ across the world, the focus in this article is largely on the Undergraduate BA models of translation which traditionally – and in many cases still – emphasise the development of linguistic competence. The first part of this article will review the role of languages in the teaching of translation studies, the concept of LSP, and the need for stronger integration of ICC into the trainees' language classroom to help students to develop both *translation* and *translator* competence. We shall then consider the existing models which already draw upon these concepts and propose an integrated competence framework for developing ICC in trainee translators' translation-oriented language classroom.

We note that undergraduate translation teaching curricula and practices differ significantly in type across the world and indeed Europe, and our inability to represent all types of courses in this article; there are substantial differences in BA translation course offerings even within one national boundary. For example, some BA courses include interpreting within Translation programmes while others explicitly name it. In this article we refer largely to translation as involving written texts; where we feel it is necessary to make the distinction, we will do so (see for example 2.2).

2. LSP and ICC in Translation Studies: A Review of Concepts and Some Theoretical Considerations

2.1 The Role of Languages in Translation Studies Teaching

James S. Holmes (1972) has played a significant role in shaping the discipline of translation studies and his contributions continue to be influential today. His emphasis on the importance of the translation process, cultural and linguistic context, and the development of translation pedagogy have helped to establish translation studies as a distinct and important field of study. He believes that translation should be taught as a distinct discipline from language learning, with a focus on developing linguistic and cultural competencies. Although aware that FL/L2 teaching for translators has drawn on the theoretical sources of language teaching, he advocates that it should also be considered as a specific professionally-oriented field and should address the needs arising from the professional practice of translation.

Even though knowledge of languages is a key competence in translator training and, more specifically, in the development of translation competence (Malmkjær, 2004; Brehm-Cripps, 2007; Cerezo Herrero, 2020), academic works dedicated to applied languages and their teaching implications within the disciplinary framework of translation studies are still scarce. As a result, FL/L2 languages have continued to be taught following generalist methodological patterns, such as a communicative approach (see Council of Europe, 2001), inductive learning, task-based instruction or a natural

approach. While these approaches are suitable for developing general language competence, the needs of translators are considerably more specialised, going beyond (or at least in parallel with) the typical objectives of a more general language proficiency class (Cerezo Herrero, 2020; Clouet, 2010; Oster, 2008).

Some specific curriculum proposals for translation students include: (1) enhancing reading comprehension, (2) learning to dissociate languages in contact, (3) familiarising students with the use of dictionaries and other resources, (4) transforming students into cultural experts, and (5) raising students' awareness of the translation activity (Berenguer, 1996); a stronger focus on developing socio-cultural competence and contrastive competence between the working languages (Hurtado Albir, 1999; Malmkjær, 2004; Kiraly, 2000); and the development of critical and autonomous thinking (Bernardini, 2004). Among the more recent studies, Enrique Cerezo Herrero (2020), Clouet (2010, 2021) and Néstor Singer et al. (2019) highlight the importance of establishing a connection between language training and the job market.

2.1.1 Languages for specific purposes (LSP) for translator training

It is not uncommon for LSP teaching to focus on specific workplace contexts such as the medical or legal professions and to offer methodologies for training translators in these areas. In addition to language proficiency, trainee translators may also need to develop specialised knowledge in the languages they are studying such as specific laws and regulations, understanding medical terminology and procedures, or becoming familiar with technical specifications and standards; this can help open their eyes to other linguistic and cultural contexts and enable them to produce accurate and effective translations that meet the needs of their clients. Translation is often mentioned as a methodological tool in professional LSP contexts, for example, working in multilingual teams; Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield (2013) note however that the translation profession is often overlooked as an LSP context *in its own right*.

The methodological specificities of what some researchers now refer to as translation- and interpreting-oriented language learning and teaching, or TILLT (Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021), are not widely known or used by FL/L2 language teachers in translator training institutions. According to TILLT approaches, teaching should offer “well-designed translation-based language learning activities” (Carreres, 2014, p. 129), responding to the trainee translators' specific needs (Berenguer, 1997; Carrasco Flores, 2019; Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021; Clouet, 2021), which is primarily the ability to use language as a professional tool (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) and engage with translation as a means of improving their linguistic skills.

Translation-oriented BA programmes must not solely focus on developing linguistic proficiency but also nurturing the skills and knowledge of professional mediation (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015; Seidl, 2021). In other words, trainee translators must understand how meaning is constructed and make decisions accordingly while ensuring effective communication of intended messages and cultural nuances. This

competence considers social, cultural and political influences on translation choices and acknowledges the process of text creation and meaning production. Intercultural communicative competence research may aid in this endeavour.

2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence and Translator Training

Intercultural communication has experienced a shift away from the more binary ‘large’ (often cross-national) culture comparisons to a focus on the processes of meaning-making in interaction; certainly, this has been the approach in much of Western European/Anglophone research and educational environments (Woodin, 2018a, 2018b). Concepts identified under the umbrella of Intercultural Communication are drawn upon in subject areas far broader than languages (Hua, 2016, p. 4), reflecting its complex nature as well as its near-universal relevance.

These shifts in intercultural communication run in parallel to shifts in translation studies, where the focus has moved in recent years from text-oriented approaches to those which focus on the role of the translators themselves (Munday, 2012), decolonising practices (e.g., Hamaidia et al., 2018), and opening up spaces through which meaning is made, both in Translation and Intercultural Communication (Woodin et al., 2021).

Researchers have defined and modelled intercultural competence in a range of ways, with some overall agreement that it relates to the ability to interact with others effectively and appropriately, and that this ability involves a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g., Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997, 2008, 2021; Deardorff, 2006, 2009). Of these, Michael Byram is one of the most widely cited theorists of intercultural competence development with his influential model of ICC within the field of FL/L2 education. Byram’s model of ICC (1997, 2009, 2021) incorporates five *savoirs*: intercultural knowledge and skills *savoir* (knowledge of self and other, of interaction); *savoir être* (relativising self, valuing other); *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating); *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovering and/or interacting); and *savoir s’engager* (political education, critical cultural awareness) (1997, p. 16; 2021, pp. 42-44).

Designed initially to support language teachers to develop learners beyond communicative competence into intercultural communicative competence, his model (see Figure 1) focuses on the language learner as someone who “can use their competences in many other contexts – for example, in periods of residence in another country, in interactions with people of other social groups in their own country, and in their daily experiences of hybridity of cultures” (2009, pp. 326-7).

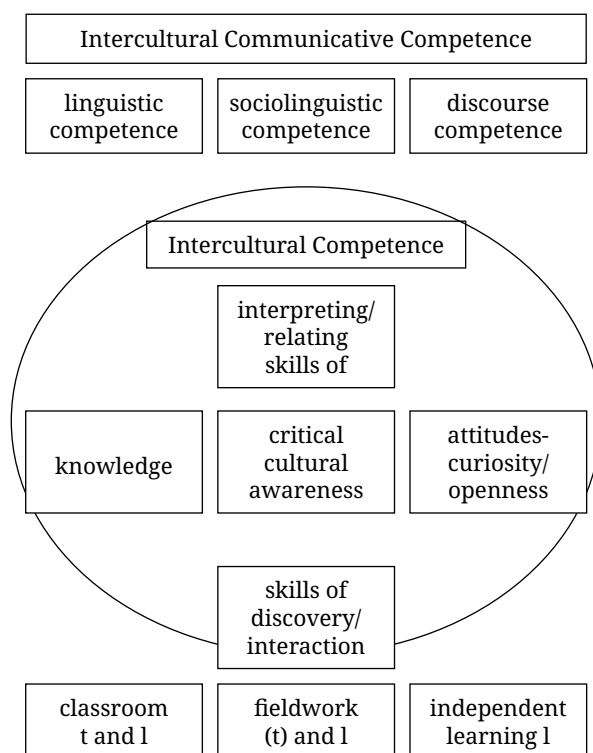


Figure 1. Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 2009).

Intercultural Communicative Competence re-positions the language learners' model from the native speaker to the intercultural speaker, able to decentre from their perspective and adopt that of others, who can show curiosity and openness about others' linguistic and cultural practices in addition to being able to use language effectively. While many have recognised the need for foreign language teaching and learning to be better aligned with increasing globalisation (e.g., Abdallah-Preteille, 2003; Corbett, 2003; Deardorff, 2004; Dervin, 2004; Fantini, 2009), this shift has not proven easy in many language learning contexts (e.g., Sercu et al., 2005), particularly where restrictions on teachers' time are tight because of examination requirements and where fewer readily available resources exist for developing ICC.

It is not possible to describe intercultural competence for language learners without reference to the person. Angela Scarino (2010) states that an intercultural (as opposed to cultural) orientation "seeks the transformation of students' identities in the act of learning" (2010, p. 324).

One way in which the person orientation in translation studies has been conceptualised is in the concept of intercultural mediation, referring to interpreting spoken (as opposed to written) texts. Mediation involves a range of skills and techniques, including active listening, effective communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The mediator must be impartial and unbiased and must strive to create an environment of trust and mutual respect among the parties (Busch, 2022; Mayer, 2020). The Council of Europe

describes mediation in the Common European Framework of Reference as follows: “The user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 103).

Whether an interpreter can – or indeed should – remain ‘impartial and unbiased’ is questioned by some (e.g., Hamaidia et al., 2018; Spinzi, 2022). An intercultural perspective on this in relation to the translation process could be informed by a need to articulate one’s political position (critical cultural awareness) (Byram, 1997; Guilherme, 2000) and seek to decolonise the translation/process (Risager 2022) or make visible hidden inequalities (Woodin et al., 2021). This is a different goal in translation studies from the traditional invisibility of the translator.

2.3 Summary

For trainee translators, linguistic proficiency is certainly important, but not enough in itself to address the needs both of *translation* and *translator* training (see Introduction). An LSP approach entails the learning of specific linguistic terminology as well as an understanding of broader professional contexts, including that of the translation profession itself, where students need to be proficient in understanding the (linguistic and cultural) limits and possibilities within the professional task they are undertaking. As intercultural mediators, translators need to be sensitive to the cultural differences between the source and target languages, and seek to understand the underlying cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions that inform the texts being translated, and work to convey these accurately in the target language while recognising not only the context within which the texts originated and are being translated, but take responsibility as translators for the decisions they make, and allow for processes of meaning-making to be more visible. Power relations between cultural groups (Pym, 2016), and linguistic and/or professional constraints do mean that a translator does not have a blank slate to work from; in addition to the source/original text, they have ethical decisions to make. The authors are informed by both LSP and ICC research and advocate the education of students through both *translation* and *translator* approach.

3. Current Developments in Translator Training

3.1 Translation Competence

For trainee translators, linguistic proficiency is certainly important, but not sufficient. In recent years, translator training has undergone several notable developments driven by advancements in technology, changes in industry demands and evolving educational approaches, with accompanying attempts at defining, conceptualising and revisiting translation competence. Pym’s conceptualisation of translation competence encompasses various dimensions beyond mere linguistic proficiency:

There can be no doubt that translators need to know a fair amount of grammar, rhetoric, terminology, computer skills, Internet savvy, world knowledge, teamwork cooperation, strategies for getting paid correctly, and the rest, but the specifically translational part of

their practice is strictly neither linguistic nor solely commercial. It is a process of generation and selection, a problem-solving process that often occurs with apparent automatism (Pym, 2003, p. 489).

This minimalist approach is often seen as a valuable point of departure on translation competence in translator training. However, many translation scholars argue that the multifaceted nature of translation as a complex cognitive and communicative activity that goes beyond linguistic proficiency requires the necessity to develop theoretical models of translation competence from both a didactic and professional perspective. We shall now consider some of these models and reflect on their relationship both to the professional orientation of LSP and the development of ICC.

3.1.1 PACTE Group's Translation Competence Model

The PACTE research group (Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) was formed in October 1997, and in particular their NACT project (Spanish acronym for *Nivelación de competencias en la Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora*, in other words 'Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Translation') (Hurtado Albir et al., 2019) evidence the need for a multidisciplinary intercultural focus in translator training where educators are required to provide trainee translators with:

- a. Linguistic competence, by helping students to understand the role of language in intercultural communication, including the differences in linguistic structure, semantics, and pragmatics across different languages and cultures.
- b. Sociocultural competence, by providing insights into the cultural practices and beliefs of different groups, and the ways in which culture shapes behaviour and communication.
- c. Communication competence, by providing a framework for understanding the process of communication, including the role of nonverbal communication, the dynamics of interpersonal communication, and the impact of media and technology on communication.
- d. Critical thinking, by helping students to understand the social structures and power dynamics that influence intercultural communication, and the ways in which social identity impacts communication.
- e. Procedural knowledge required to ensure the effectiveness of the translation process, particularly the identification of translation problems and the application of solutions.

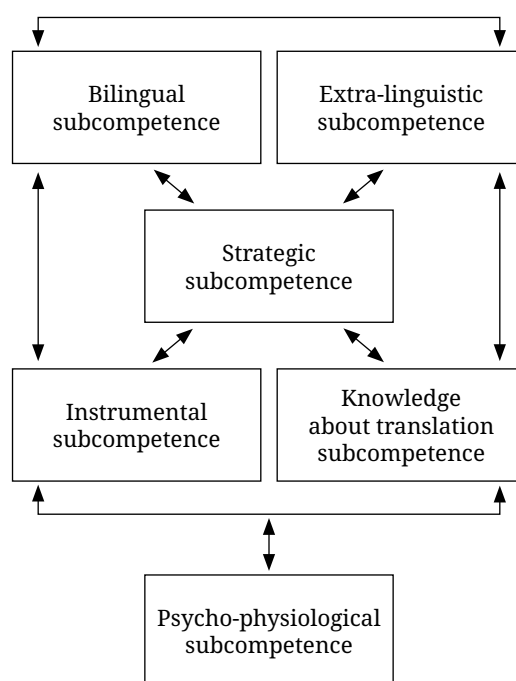


Figure 2. Model of Translation Competence (PACTE Group, 2017).

The PACTE model reflects the inherently multidisciplinary nature of translation, drawing on insights from a range of fields – including Dell Hymes’s (1972) communicative competence – that converge in intercultural communication, and highlighting the importance of collaboration and cross-disciplinary dialogue in advancing understanding of the intricacies and complexity that the translation process entails (Piecychna, 2020). It comprises both declarative knowledge (know-what) and procedural knowledge (know-how). It activates a series of psycho-physiological mechanisms that relate to the translator themselves as opposed to the translation/text including cognitive components (such as memory, perception, attention and emotions), attitudes (aspects such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, accuracy, a critical mind, knowledge of and confidence in one’s own abilities, motivation, etc.), and other skills such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis ability, etc. This model emphasizes the dynamic nature of the translation process and focuses on the translator’s abilities to engage in the process of personal development. It is in line with the dynamic nature of intercultural learning, focusing on the ongoing process of acquiring, practising, and refining intercultural skills rather than viewing competence as a fixed outcome (Deardorff, 2008).

The focus on a process-oriented approach is essential as it highlights the elements that may influence the translator’s decision when deciding on the strategy that should be deployed in the translation process. This process-orientation moves us towards a

recognition of the ‘messy intercultural spaces’ found in everyday work contexts such as multilingual NGOs (Hamaidia et al., 2018, p. 119), but perhaps stops short of identifying this process-orientation as an ethical commitment to action-taking. As Woodin et al. put it:

Translating cultures necessarily requires a consideration of the concepts of translation and intercultural communication, together with opportunities for individuals to take action to open up spaces where shared understanding has perhaps either been imposed (through monolingual – usually English language – practices), or assumed to be shared (through competing agendas of efficiency and clarity over the time-consuming focus on complexities and multiple meanings, for example) (2021, p. 56).

Opening up spaces in the translation process helps understand the contexts of positions and can contribute to reducing power differentials and inequalities (Woodin et al., 2021, pp. 64-65).

PACTE also recommended that the model should be addressed in a dynamic way, as the sub-competences are subject to variation at any time, considering the fluid nature of texts and contexts. The model does not explicitly refer to the concept of intercultural competence but to extralinguistic competence. However, this sub-competence is related to the (inter)cultural aspect because it concerns knowledge of the world and bicultural knowledge (see Byram’s model, Figure 1).

Various other models have tried to describe the intercultural competences required in translation training programmes (e.g., Pym, 2004; Göpferich, 2008; Katan, 2009; Kiraly, 2013; Witte, 2000; Yarosh, 2012, 2015). Here we focus on three more well-established theoretical models: the European Masters in Translation (EMT) model (2022) and the Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT) model (Tomozeiu et al., 2016); the former is aimed particularly at trainee translators while the latter focuses more on professional translation. We shall also consider Cerezo Herrero’s (2019) contribution, which focuses largely on LSP.

3.1.2 The EMT Model

The EMT model claims to be “one of the leading reference standards for translator training and translation competence throughout the European Union and beyond, both in academic circles and in the language industry” (EMT, 2017, p. 2), with the aim of training students to “translate and mediate in specific intercultural contexts” (EMT, 2017, p. 8), thereby highlighting the importance of intercultural communication training in translation studies (see Figure 3). Recent iterations of the EMT model have identified five sub-competences (language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision) reflecting, unlike the PACTE group model, “human skills as a differentiator in a technologized employment market, where linguistic, critical, and ethical competences can combine to produce a transversal skill set to equip graduates for the future” (EMT, 2022, p. 2). It is notable also that this development reflects the transformation undergone by the

translation profession, notably technological changes, and focuses on the interdependence of all the areas of competence (Froeliger et al., 2022), as opposed to earlier models (e.g., EMT, 2017) which were founded on academic conceptual considerations).

The model highlights the importance of linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, transcultural and communicative skills. The two dimensions are made explicit: the linguistic dimension covers the ability to understand the function of language variations (social, geographical or historical) and to use the appropriate grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures of their working languages. The sociolinguistic dimension involves identifying cultural elements, values and references in the written, spoken or multimodal text (including presuppositions, allusions and stereotypes) and writing in accordance with the cultural conventions, and conventions of genre and rhetorical standards (EMT, 2022, p. 6). Here we can see that for EMT, intercultural competence focuses particularly on texts (written or spoken) and the translator's linguistic expertise in interpreting these. These aspects can be seen to correspond with Byram's knowledge and skills (see Figure 1); less focus is on the translator's interpersonal skills in terms of attitudes and/or critical cultural awareness. It is interesting, given the focus on translator training, how the person-focused intercultural aspects of being a translator –identified in PACTE – are not reflected in the EMT, particularly given the stated focus on training.

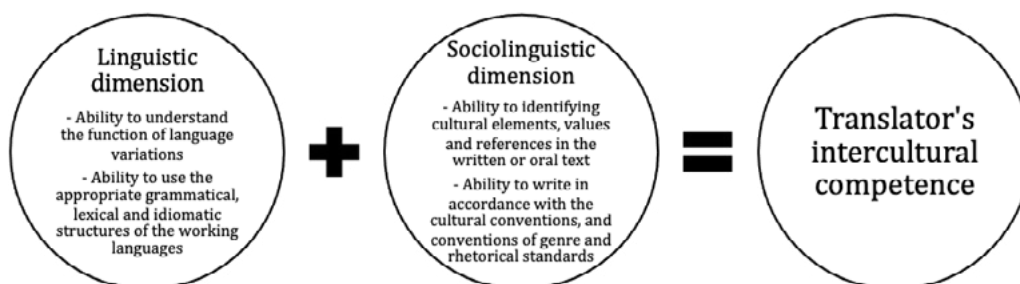


Figure 3. Model of Intercultural Competence in Translators (EMT, 2022).

3.1.3 The PICT Model

The third model (Figure 4) comes from the PICT (Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators) EU project co-ordinated by Daniel Tomozeiu from the University of Westminster between 2011 and 2013. The group's main objective was to provide a framework for teaching and assessing intercultural competence in university and higher education translation programmes, including lesson plans and assessment tasks (Tomozeiu et al., 2016). Given the desirable intercultural outcome of such programmes, translators should be trained on the basis of three dimensions: (1) a theoretical dimension, that includes core concepts of the theory of intercultural communication, conceptual tools for analysing the intercultural perspective, knowledge of the cultural context of translation, and awareness of the links between intercultural communication theory and translation studies; (2) a textual dimension, that includes the ability to analyse cultural issues and texts from source and target audiences from a comparative perspective, to recognise problems of non-equivalence and to apply strategies to address them; (3) and

an interpersonal dimension, that includes cultural awareness and empathy manifested in social exchange, curiosity and proactiveness, sensitivity to affects and potential conflicts in communication, and social positioning (PICT, 2012a). The PICT model considers the translator's overall intercultural competence which goes beyond text production. More specifically, in addition to knowledge and abilities pertaining to the theoretical and textual spheres, the intercultural competence also includes a set of attitudes, such as cultural awareness, empathy, curiosity, sensitivity, or social positioning (PICT, 2012b). These interpersonal skills make the learning outcomes of translator training explicit: beyond rendering meaning from one language into another, translators should perform their role as mediators between cultures; in the PICT model, intercultural competence is explicit, and the translator is central.

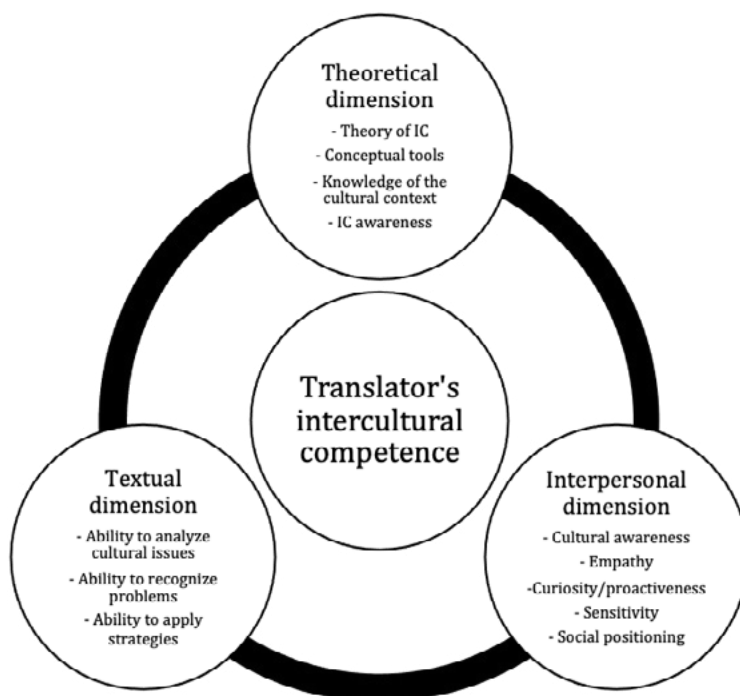


Figure 4. Model of Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT, 2012).

3.2 Language Competence

Few researchers have been working on models for LSP competences, and even fewer on models for translation-oriented language competences (Andreu Lucas et al., 2002; Cerezo Herrero, 2019; Schmidhofer, 2022). In her systematic review of the research output in that field, Astrid Schmidhofer (2022) offers a classification of contributions published over the last thirty years and laments that most of them deal with goals, methodology and classroom procedures, and hardly any with translation-oriented language competences. The focus is too often laid on language proficiency – which is certainly a requirement and recruitment condition for translators – without paying enough attention to the specific purposes of the language. The only real attempt at designing a model was that carried

out by [Cerezo Herrero \(2019\)](#) and published in an article under the title “Systematization of competences in language B teaching for translation studies in the EHEA from a translation competence model.” The model was later developed by [Cerezo Herrero et al. \(2021, see Figure 5\)](#) to adapt it in a clearer way to LSP acquisition/teaching; it is accompanied by a series of recommendations for practitioners relating to syllabus design, and teaching approaches and resources.

Of particular note here is the focus on LSP through the centring of professional language use, while still recognising the ‘thematic spectrum’ which encompasses ‘the idea that a translator must be able to linguistically cope with any field of expertise’ ([Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021, pp. 145-6](#)).

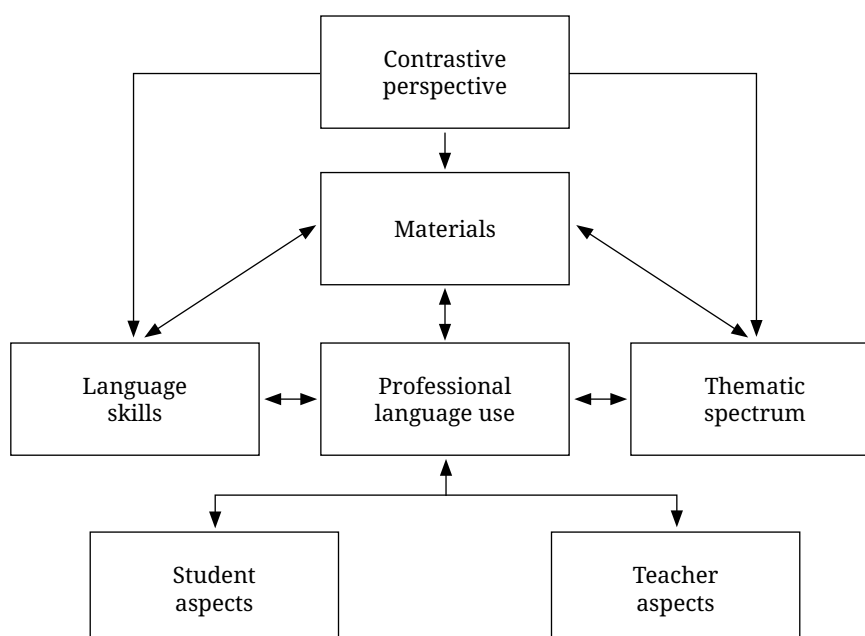


Figure 5. LSP Framework for Translation and Interpreting ([Cerezo Herrero, Schmidhofer & Koletnik, 2021](#)).

However, in reviewing these models, we acknowledge that influential perspectives in contemporary language education, notably plurilingualism and translanguaging, have not been fully addressed. These theoretical frameworks, particularly as developed by [García \(2019\)](#), [Vogel and García \(2017\)](#) and [Canagarajah \(2011\)](#), offer valuable insights into how cultural and linguistic mediation is enacted in increasingly fluid and multilingual environments. Translation students are generally trained to work with their A language and at least with one B and one C language, but they are not often led to recognise that, through this plurilingual knowledge, they can draw on a repertoire of interconnected languages and varieties, rather than function in strictly bounded linguistic systems. Furthermore, incorporating translanguaging approaches in their studies can, in turn, emphasise the dynamic use of multiple linguistic resources to make meaning, negotiate identity and engage in cross-cultural communication. This perspective shifts

the pedagogical focus from mastering separate languages to developing flexible, context-sensitive mediation skills. It is not present in the models we have explored. However, we believe that bringing translanguaging and plurilingualism into conversation with LSP and ICC in translator training would invite educators to reconsider not only what is meant by language proficiency, but also how students are prepared to navigate complex, multilingual communicative contexts with reflexivity and critical awareness.

Having reviewed the models above we can see that there are preferences for either LSP or ICC focus. We advocate the integration of both these aspects, in line with Agata Klimczak-Pawlak (2018) who notes the increasing importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in professional translation practice, particularly in specialised domains where cultural nuances can significantly impact communication.

3.3 Summary

After considering the crucial role of languages in translation studies, their specificity as LSP, the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence in classes for trainee translator, given the mediating position of translators who do not only need language proficiency, but also strive to bridge the gap between readers and texts of different languages and cultures, it is clear that linguistic proficiency approaches to translator training will not be sufficient for this important professional development. Current developments in translator training evidence a growing recognition of the importance of integrating intercultural competence into educational curricula. This acknowledgment reflects the evolving nature of translation as a profession, emphasising not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural communication and the professional context.

The models we have discussed above clearly represent a trend towards a more holistic and multidimensional approach to translator education, one that prepares students to meet the complex challenges of the globalised world and position themselves actively and acknowledge their humanity in their professional practice. This involves recognising their agency and responsibility in the translation process, as well as the subjective nature of their role as mediators between languages and cultures. Translators can thus bring their unique perspectives, experiences and values to their work, thereby enriching the translation process and fostering authentic communication, in other words promoting understanding, rather than passive conduits of information. We note that some models focus more on one aspect (for example contrastive elements of language and culture, the professional context or interpersonal attributes). We argue that these are all important aspects and are necessary if we are to bring together both translator and translation training.

It is also interesting to note how all four models generally overlook current implications related to machine translation (MT) post-editing and artificial intelligence (AI) when addressing translation competences. As stated by Clouet and Massot, these should be taken into consideration:

The integration of artificial intelligence and the increase in the use of MT, the process by which computer software is used to translate a text automatically from one language to another without human involvement, has changed translators' roles and working realities" (Clouet and Massot, 2024, p. 32).

The original PACTE model does not directly address MT or AI. However, the instrumental sub-competence includes "use of documentation resources and new technologies", which could be interpreted to include MT and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools. In more recent PACTE publications (e.g. post-2010), there is acknowledgment of technological change, but MT and post-editing are not central components of the model. The same occurs with PICT. It does not include specific reference to MT, post-editing or AI either, and its emphasis is more on intercultural awareness, mediation and ethics, meaning it is less technically oriented.

EMT, however, explicitly includes MT and post-editing. The "Technological Competence" domain includes proficiency with CAT tools and MT systems, post-editing of machine-translated output, critical evaluation of MT quality and suitability, and awareness of AI's role in translation workflows. EMT also references the need for digital literacy, ethical awareness in the use of AI, and adaptability in the current evolving technological landscape.

Finally, MT and post-editing are fully integrated in Cerezo Herrero et al.'s LSP Framework with critical, real-world competence development. The framework stresses that LSP training must reflect real-world demands, including the use of AI-assisted translation tools, and the expectation that translators critically assess and post-edit MT output.

4. Towards a Competence Framework to Develop ICC in Trainee Translators' LSP Classroom

The most currently used models in translator education differ slightly in their approach as to the competences they place at the core of the training process. Some, like the PACT group model, put the focus on the translator and on a process-oriented approach, and highlight both declarative and procedural knowledge when it comes to deciding on translation strategies. Others, like the EMT model, focus on texts – notably the translator's ability to interpret these – and give particular importance to the sociolinguistic context in which these texts are produced. In the PICT model, on the other hand, intercultural competence is central, and the "interculturally competent translator" (Tomozeiu & Kumpulainen, 2016, p. 251) is what training programmes should aim at. Finally, Cerezo Herrero et al.'s TILLT framework advocates the integration of an LSP approach in translator training, as LSP is essential to understanding texts and performing efficiently in professional contexts. In summary, these models either put the main focus on the text (EMT, TILLT), the context (EMT, TILLT), the translator (PACT, PICT), or intercultural competence (PICT).

The model we present below builds on these four translation models, as well as on Byram's model of the intercultural speaker (1997, 2021), but seeks to do so in a holistic and integrative way. It encompasses all four dimensions in an interactive process where text, context, IC and the translator are correlated to each other, but in the end, it offers a product which is, however, not necessarily fixed.

The importance of the text in translation cannot be overstated, as it serves as the foundation upon which the entire translation process is built. The text can be defined as a dynamic phenomenon with linguistic and sociolinguistic features that range from syntactic and morphosyntactic levels, the understanding of LSP lexis to the appraisal of its context and social function. By acknowledging the dynamic nature of text, we can appreciate its complexity, richness, and ongoing significance in shaping our understanding of the world. We also recognize the basic idea that text and context cannot be viewed as separate entities, as the text always refers to the particular situation – historical, social, political, cultural – enveloping it. The way readers – in this case, translators – engage with a text can also affect its dynamic nature.

Texts can be interpreted differently based on the translator's perspective, experiences, and cultural background. What one person finds meaningful, for instance, another may interpret differently. This dynamic nature of interpretation contributes to ongoing discussions and debates surrounding texts, and this is precisely where the role of the translator comes into play, as an active one. Apart from linguistic and subject-matter expertise to accurately convey technical or specialised terminology, translators must possess the necessary skills and apply the adequate strategies to mediate between languages, cultures, and social conditions, while trying to negotiate the meaning between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). The decision-making dimension in the translation process is determined by the translator's interpreting skills in their broadest sense, openness, creativity, cultural practices and ethical considerations, amongst others.

The translator, through processes of analysis, feedback, reviews, discussions, adaptations, and generally speaking, mediation, contributes to the ongoing life of a text beyond its initial creation and thus becomes an active agent of change whose choices and actions are influenced by their own cultural background, beliefs and experiences. This is why our model also advocates a person-oriented focus that emphasizes the human aspect of translation, recognising the agency, subjectivity and cultural identities of all parties involved, including power relations and positionality. The authors strongly believe that, in a post-colonial age, power dynamics highlight the need for critical awareness, reflexivity and ethical responsibility in navigating the complexities of translation within unequal linguistic and cultural landscapes (Woodin et al., 2021).

This approach prioritises the voices and perspectives of individuals and communities whose texts are being translated, ensuring that their cultural and linguistic identities are respected and represented authentically (Cronin, 2006, 2013). A person-oriented focus can be seen in the recognition of how social identity might impact communication, but this

person-focus is still somehow outside of the translator themselves and does not centralise the translator in the training model as much as the knowledge and skills which the translator should acquire.

The framework also highlights the different settings/contexts in which training can take place: the LSP classroom (through communicative and translation-related/pedagogic translation activities, for instance), the translation classroom (through professional translation activities); professional contexts (through mediation and translation activities). Indeed, models of translator training need also to recognise the contextual domains of development within –and beyond– the language classroom; for example, in-field placements or collaborative training.

Therefore, our model accommodates the above dimensions, as well as focuses on the twenty-first century translator as one with a position and perspective which needs to be recognised (see ‘critical cultural awareness’). The intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997) is always present to one degree or another, and we believe that text, context and the translator should be treated equally in translator education, in order to avoid a static or reductionist approach to intercultural competence; with IC functioning as the backbone of the model. For these reasons, LSP/translation-related courses need to involve not only a focus on linguistic abilities and awareness, but also to develop students’ ability to exercise intercultural sensitivity, especially in these turbulent times when LSP can contribute significantly to our ability to navigate and understand complex issues on a global scale and provide the tools for understanding the global purposes of documents.

In addition to building on the foundational competences of PACTE, EMT, PICT, and TILLT, our model seeks to address a significant evolution in the translation profession: the increasing centrality of machine translation (MT), post-editing, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the translator’s workflow. The EMT Competence Framework and Cerezo Herrero et al.’s LSP Framework have begun to articulate the importance of digital literacy, critical evaluation of MT outputs, and ethical awareness of AI-assisted translation. Our model takes this further by situating these technologies within the translator’s intercultural and ethical positioning. This involves training students to assess the appropriateness and consequences of using MT systems, and equipping future translators with the ethical and intercultural judgment to decide when and how post-editing is appropriate, particularly in sensitive contexts, such as legal, medical, or humanitarian translation.

Furthermore, by considering plurilingual and translanguaging approaches, the model acknowledges the lived linguistic realities of both translators and the communities they serve. Translators often operate in multilingual settings where fluid language practices are the norm, rather than the exception. Incorporating these approaches into training fosters a more realistic and inclusive understanding of communication, where language is not seen as fixed or compartmentalised, but as dynamic and contextually responsive. This allows future translators to recognise and value their entire linguistic repertoire as a resource, rather than limiting themselves to rigid, monolingual norms.

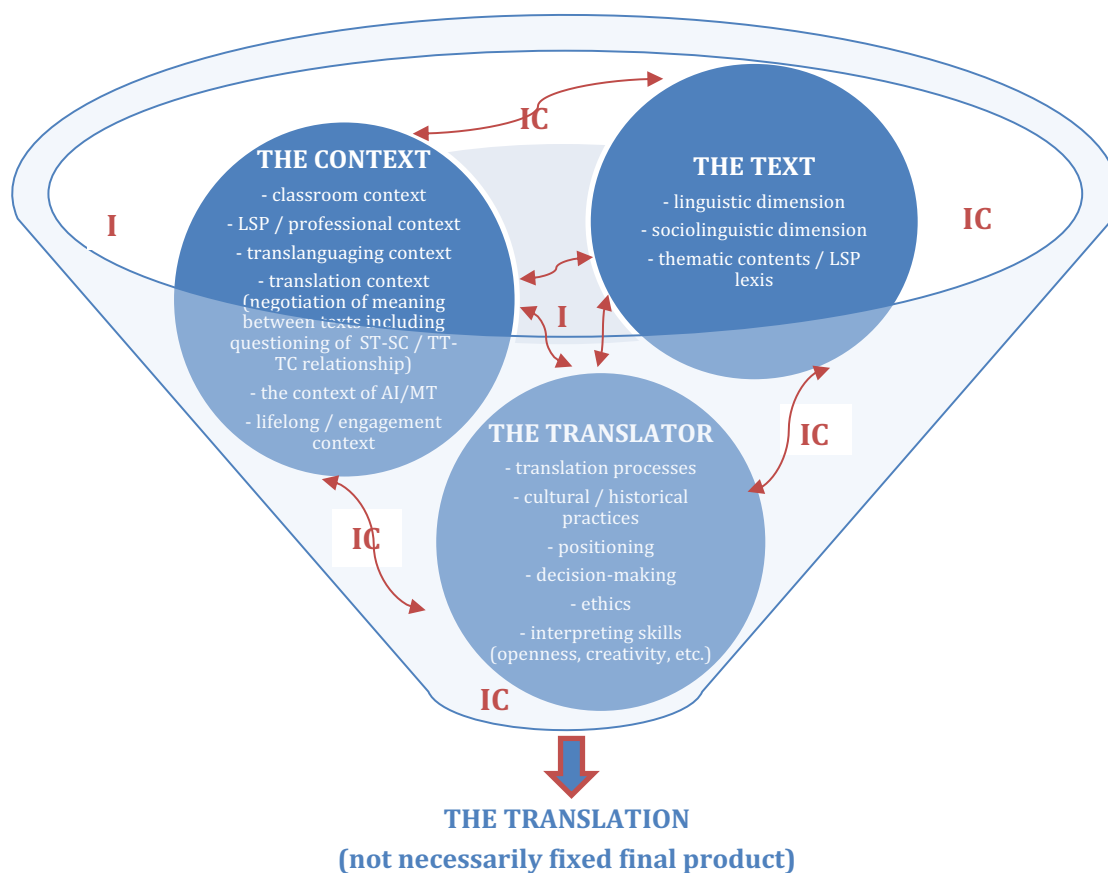


Figure 6. Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) for Trainee Translators.

To recapitulate, our model (Figure 6) proposes to re-orient translation/translator competence to provide a better balance between text and context, as well as between translation and the translator. It incorporates a range of factors, both internal and external to the translation process, that should lead to the acknowledgement that other ways of understanding written productions are possible. With this model, we also wish to promote self-awareness and perspective-taking amongst trainee translators, and to encourage them to explore multiplicity and complexity when carrying out their translation tasks. Plurilingual and translanguaging perspectives are likewise central to this vision, as they validate the full linguistic repertoires of trainee translators and support flexible, context-sensitive meaning-making across languages. In doing so, we also highlight the growing need for translators to critically engage with emerging technologies such as machine translation, post-editing and AI-supported workflows. These tools, while increasingly present in professional contexts, must be approached not only with technical skill but also with intercultural sensitivity and ethical awareness. These competences are integral to the reflective and responsible translator we envision.

5. Examples of Classroom Activities

Back-translation is the first example we would like to give to illustrate our model. It involves translating a document from the source language into the target language (outward), and then translating it back from the target language into the source language (homeward); it is particularly useful in ensuring the acceptability of translations in professional contexts, especially in sensitive or technical content where accuracy – notably LSP accuracy – is crucial.

Back-translation, if used in academic contexts, usually serves the purpose of comparing the original text with the back-translated version in order to gain insights into linguistic structures, specialised vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or cultural norms. The ultimate objective would be to identify discrepancies, errors, or areas where the translation may not accurately convey the intended meaning. In addition, however, following our framework (Figure 5), back translation could also be used as a way to encourage ongoing critical dialogue, and give translators a voice (Ozolins, 2009; Christensen, 2016). The process of translating back and forth in this way not only develops awareness of language/cultural nuances, but can also be useful for students to position themselves actively as translators and humans, exploring meaning and choices more deeply, and promoting empathy and understanding among parties. As such, back-translation can serve the purpose of opening up spaces for intercultural communication where negotiation and positioning can take place and awareness can be raised as to the role of language and culture in understanding complex and varied meanings, multiplicities of language usage, power differentials, values and attitudes, in other words, “the messiness of everyday multilingual encounters” (Woodin et al., 2021, p. 61).

Another effective classroom activity is the use of intercultural role-play scenarios, in which students are asked to translate and then mediate between two fictional or real parties from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a scenario may involve a hospital setting where a translator must facilitate communication between a medical professional and a patient from a different linguistic and cultural background. Students first work on translating medical intake forms or instructions, and then shift roles to act as cultural mediators, identifying and negotiating areas of potential misunderstanding due to differing cultural beliefs about health, authority, or consent. This activity addresses all three model components: the Text (medical documents), the Context (healthcare setting), and the Translator (as an active, reflexive agent). The role-play enables trainees to consider ethical implications, manage power asymmetries, and adapt communication strategies appropriately.

A third classroom practice that reinforces intercultural awareness is comparative translation analysis. Students are presented with multiple professional translations of the same source text, often drawn from different regions or cultural backgrounds (e.g., a press release translated in both American and British English). Students critically examine the variations in vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, tone, and cultural assumptions embedded in each version. Through guided discussion and written reflection, they explore

how cultural positioning and local expectations shape translation choices. This activity encourages learners to identify not just linguistic but also socio-political nuances, fostering an understanding of how contextual constraints and target audience expectations affect the translator’s work. It highlights the relationship between Text and Context, while reinforcing the Translator’s interpretive role.

Introducing reflective journals as an ongoing classroom task helps trainees become more aware of their decision-making processes and cultural positioning. After completing translation tasks, students are asked to write structured reflections on questions such as: What challenges did I face in translating culturally loaded terms? What assumptions did I bring to this text? How did I adapt the message for the target audience? Over time, these journals reveal patterns in how students negotiate meaning and develop intercultural sensitivity. Teachers can prompt them to link their reflections to theoretical readings discussed in class, thus encouraging a deeper engagement with translation theory. This activity strengthens the Translator component of the model and supports the cultivation of critical intercultural competence.

The table below shows how these activities match the model components: Translator/Text/Context.

Classroom activities mapped to model components.

Activity	Translator	Text	Context
Back-translation for dialogue	Positions translator as active agent in meaning negotiation	Focus on comparing original and back-translated texts	Encourages reflective dialogue on precision, meaning, and socio-cultural fit in communication
Intercultural role-play	Develops mediation skills, empathy, negotiation, and awareness of cultural bias	Involves culturally rich texts like medical forms, legal documents, etc.	Simulates real-life settings (e.g., hospitals, courts) with social and ethical dynamics
Comparative translation analysis	Enhances critical thinking and self-positioning as a cultural interpreter	Contrasts multiple translations to examine lexis, tone, and meaning shifts	Explores geopolitical, regional, or institutional variations in translation expectations
Reflective translation journals	Encourages metacognition, self-awareness, and integration of theory into practice	Based on personal translation work and decision-making processes	Reveals evolving understanding of sociocultural dynamics in translation contexts

These examples of activities do not need to be teacher-centred – they can be undertaken with peers, groups, and/or across online communities (which reflect the reality of many professional translators’ work). This can help with focusing on the negotiation of meaning, contexts and decisions, as well as requiring students to articulate their choices to each other (Clouet & Massot, 2024, p. 39-41).

6. Conclusion

Designing a model of ICC development for translation-oriented language education requires a systematic approach that involves both theoretical and practical considerations. The model presented here above focuses on preparing trainee translators to become professional intercultural mediators who can effectively bridge the gap between cultures. A model is rarely a blueprint for developing teaching activities, as it cannot envisage the individual characteristics and needs of a classroom, and not all translation/or-oriented courses will have the same specific needs and/or outcomes. They can be used however as guides or reflection points for considering over-arching aims and outcomes, and as a reference point for curriculum development. Based on the key (flexible) components included in this model (Translator, Text and Context), we envisage intercultural competence as enabling the relationships between these components. The following considerations may help language teachers working with trainee translators when designing classroom activities:

- a. About Language/cultural knowledge: Trainee translators should have a solid foundation in the languages and cultural beliefs, values and practices of both the source and target language groups; and in the range of variations within the language/culture group as defined by the context. This includes a growing understanding of constraints and affordances within specific professional contexts including specialised linguistic and cultural practices.
- b. About conceptual understanding: Trainee translators should have a good grounding in the broad theoretical underpinnings which give rise to certain ways of conceptualising language/s and culture/s, most simply in terms of the relationship between assumed knowledge, practices and processes and key concepts in translation
- c. About intercultural awareness: Trainee translators should be trained to recognise and appreciate cultural (and linguistic) differences, similarities and processes as well as an understanding of the linguistic nuances and cultural connotations of the source language. This includes an awareness of their own cultural biases and assumptions, and an ability to adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of the target language/cultural group as defined by the context (e.g., professional context). It also includes an understanding of power implications relating to choice of lexis, potential biases in AI solutions based on large language models and translation strategy.
- d. About communication skills: Trainee translators should be trained in effective communication skills, including active listening, questioning, and clarifying. They should also be trained in intercultural communication skills, such as recognising and interpreting non-verbal cues and adjusting communication styles to suit the cultural context. These skills are clearly highly relevant when engaged in

interpreting; however, there are opportunities for negotiating meaning and making conscious decisions regarding the possibilities and constraints even within written or multimodal translation activities.

- e. About cultural mediation skills: Trainee translators should be trained in mediation skills, including negotiation, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. This includes cultural mediation skills, such as identifying and addressing cultural misunderstandings, finding ways to bridge linguistic/cultural gaps, and/or articulate decisions made and the underlying ethical reasons for making them.
- f. About cultural immersion: Trainee translators should be provided with opportunities for cultural immersion, such as study abroad programmes – including online programmes – or internships in a target-language culture and or specific professional context. This will help them to gain first-hand experience and develop a deeper understanding of the cultural and/or professional context, and develop critical awareness of the realities of our often non-homogenous groups which are often described as ‘a culture’.

The points a) to e) represent the kinds of outcomes which a university translation-training oriented curriculum might recognise. They link to the model in that they all address at least two of the moving bubbles in the receptacle (Figure 5) and link to typical activities which might be undertaken in a classroom – in the case of a) to d).

In this article we have proposed the need for a re-think of the trainee-translator classroom, focusing on both text and person (*translation* and *translator*). We have reviewed relevant models for translation-oriented training, and proposed a further model which draws on the strengths of the previous models, proposing a re-balance which positions the translator as an interculturally competent, responsible and visible linguist and mediator.

In professional contexts, speed is often an essential skill for the translator with many translation companies setting word numbers against time. The complexities behind the translation processes are not often visible in professional life, and yet decisions are made on some criteria, whether the translator is aware of this or not. For us, this points even more to the necessity of an approach like ours for trainee *translation/or* programmes; university education is most likely to be the place where trainee translators will have the luxury of time to develop their broad knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of translation theory and practice which will need to serve them well into their professional future.

CRedit Author contribution / Contribución de los autores

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