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SOMMARIO

TRANSLATION COMPETENCE LEVELS PUT TO THE TEST: THE NACT FRAMEWORK AGAINST REALITY IN TWO TRANSLATION NON-SPECIFIC DEGREE PROGRAMS IN ITALY

Sara Piccioni

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the need to standardize university-level translator training across Europe has resulted in a number of initiatives, such as the NACT project, aimed at developing a framework of translation competence levels comparable to CEFR for language skills. Designed to meet the training needs of professional translators, the framework can prove problematic when applied within general Foreign Languages programs. This study assesses the applicability of the NACT model to the provision of Spanish translation in undergraduate and Master's level programs at the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Chieti-Pescara. The analysis of the syllabi on offer shows that these closely reflect the progression defined in the NACT model in terms of competence levels (from level A1 to B1+ at undergraduate level and up to level B2 at Master's level). However, factors such as class size, inadequate IT resources and poor language proficiency pose significant limitations to the applicability of the model.

Keywords: NACT framework; translation competence models; translator training; university training.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of translation is a relatively recent addition to foreign language provision at university level in Italy. Yet, following the 2001 univer-

sity reform and the (intended) "professionalisation" of higher education provision, most universities offer degree courses and Masters' programs that include translation modules. With a few notable exceptions (like the former Advanced Schools for Interpreters and Translators of the Universities of Trieste and Bologna, Forlì), translation is taught in Modern Foreign Languages departments, which are (or at least were) ill-equipped for facing the challenges of teaching an eminently practical and profession-oriented discipline.

While supposedly working towards highly specialised goals, translator training in Italian universities seems to be relying on remarkably unspecialised means. The first of these is the institutional framework within which translation teaching is provided. The (partial) standardisation of degree courses has led to the creation of undergraduate degree programs in Linguistic Mediation (L-12) and second-level degrees in Modern Languages for International Communication and Cooperation (LM-38). While these have succeeded in making the study of modern foreign languages more appealing to today's increasingly job-conscious students (thus becoming popular choices compared to other Humanities programs), popularity has come at the cost of a low level of specialisation in translation provision. The more specialised second-level degree in Specialised Translation and Interpreting (LM-94) is only offered by a very limited number of institutions [1].

On a more practical, everyday level, the quality of translator training in Italian universities is hindered by contextual factors such as class size and instructors' academic profile [2]. When working with popular language combinations, crowded classrooms do not provide the ideal environment for a discipline that is best taught in small-group seminars. Instructors are typically academics who specialise in either Linguistics or Literature with little or no specific training in translation, and limited professional experience in the field. As such, their knowledge of professional practices and the

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[1] The difference between translation-specific and translation non-specific degree courses can easily be assessed by considering the number of credits awarded by practical translation modules in each program. To provide but an example, the Masters' program in Specialised Translation offered by the University of Bologna at Forlì (LM-94) devotes 41 credits to practical translation modules, whereas the Modern Languages for International Communication and Cooperation (LM-38) Masters' program at the University 'G. d'Annunzio' of Chieti-Pescara does not have specific modules devoted exclusively to practical translation and this is taught within general Language and Translation modules for a total of 19 credits per language studied.

[2] Baselica - Martelli - Mazzarelli 2018.

requirements of a fast-changing job market are at best limited[3]. Further-more, translation is taught as part of "Language and Translation" modules, where language learning is often prioritised over translation learning under the assumption that knowing a language is a sufficient pre-requisite for translating.

In the face of such systemic despecialisation in higher education, research in translation pedagogy is heavily focussed on models of trans-lation competence tailored around the skills of specialised professional translators as well as the requirements of the profession. Among these, the European Masters' in Translation (EMT) initiative has proposed a transla-tion competence framework[4] setting out learning outcomes (described in terms of general competences and specific skills) for Masters' programs participating in the EMT network. The project, supported by the Direc-torate-General for Translation of the European Commission, establishes standards for translator training that can only be met within highly spe-cialised programs, using the professional translator and the translation job market as benchmark for identifying learning goals.

Similarly, the very influential translation competence model proposed by the PACTE group[5] identifies knowledge and skills involved in transla-tion using empirical research methods that measure the impact of different factors on the acquisition of translation competence. The subjects used to empirically test the model are either experienced professional translators[6] or translator trainees in translation-specific courses[7].

Because of the trainee/professional profile used as golden standard for the identification of translation competence components, both models are not easily applied in translation non-specific programs (TNSPs, hence-forth) like L-12 and LM-38 courses in Italian universities.

More recently, a new project of the PACTE group on "Competence Levelling in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Trans-lation" ("Nivelación de competencias en la adquisición de la competencia traductora (traducción escrita)" – NACT) has set out a model of different performance levels for translation with a view to developing a common European framework of reference to be used in translator training and

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[3] Katan 2008.
[4] EMT 2017.
[5] E.g., Hurtado Albir 2017.
[6] E.g., PACTE 2009.
[7] E.g., PACTE 2011, 2014; Kuznik - Olalla-Soler 2018.

professional translation (similar to the CEFR for languages)[8]. While the project is still in its early stages, the preliminary identification of descriptors for different levels of translation competence is a welcome guide for translator trainers in TNSPs, as it can be a starting point for developing classroom material and activities in contexts where the main focus is not the acquisition of professional-level competence in translation.

Based on these premises, the present study looks to assess the outcomes of Spanish into Italian translation provision in two TNSPs at the University 'G. d'Annunzio' of Chieti-Pescara against the translation competence levels as described in the preliminary framework devised within the NACT project. The paper has a double objective: on the one hand, it seeks to identify strengths and areas of improvement in Spanish into Italian translation provision at Chieti-Pescara; on the other, it aims to verify the applicability of the NACT framework in concrete teaching settings within TNSPs. In particular, the focus will be on: language proficiency levels expected at each translation competence level (§ 3.2); genre and text types of texts selected for translation tasks at different levels (§ 3.3); acquisition of the cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence (CWKT competence, henceforth) as reflected in translation tasks carried out by students at different levels (§ 3.4).

In what follows, the NACT framework of competence levels in translation is briefly outlined before proceeding to data analysis. The discussion and conclusion (§ 4) put forward suggestions for enhancing the adherence of translation provision to the NACT framework and for the operationalisation of the framework in concrete teaching settings.

2. Competence levels in translation

As already pointed out, the first attempt to establish a framework describing competence levels in translation has been carried within the NACT project by the PACTE group of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (hereafter NACT model).

The framework draws on translation competence models and levels proposed both in academic research (the aforementioned PACTE and EMT models) and in professional arenas, with input from professional bodies in the UK (UK's National Occupational Standards), Netherlands[9],

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[8] PACTE 2018.

[9] Vertaalacademie Maastricht - PSTEVIN 2016.

Australia (Australia's National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) [10], and the US (American Translators Association and the Code of Professional Conduct Institute of Translation and Interpreting).

In its preliminary elaboration, following the CEFR model, the framework has identified a three-level scale described as follows:
- Level A: basic translation competences of pre-professional translators.
- Level B: basic specialised translation of the generalist professional translator.
- Level C: specialist professional translator specialising in a given field (e.g., legal, economic and financial, technical, scientific, literary, audiovisual, accessibility, and localisation).

Levels A and B comprise two sub-levels: A1 and A2; B1 and B2. For each of these, a number of genres has been identified which the translator should be able to translate at each competence sub-level (see § 3.3 for more details). Below the list of genres proposed for level B1 is given as an example:
- Level B1. Non-specialized text genres corresponding to different areas of professional practice.
  - Legal and administrative: certificates (academic certificates, birth, death and marriage certificates, residence cards, certificates of municipal registration, criminal record certificates, etc.); work permits; reports, advertorials; secondary school textbooks; general encyclopaedia entries; explanatory articles/books.
  - Economic and financial: bills for everyday products; advertising texts for insurance products (life insurance, civil liability insurance, multirisk insurance, etc.); banking products (pension plans, bank deposits, accounts, personal loans); reports, advertorials; secondary school textbooks; general encyclopaedia entries; explanatory articles/books.
  - Technical instruction manuals; product catalogues (lawnmowers, food processors, ovens, etc.); reports, advertorials; secondary school textbooks; general encyclopaedia entries; explanatory articles/books.
  - Scientific: patient information leaflets; health information campaigns; product catalogues (nutritional supplements, animal feed, wines, insecticides, etc.); reports, advertorials; general encyclopaedia entries; secondary school textbooks; explanatory articles/books.
  - Non-literary publishing: journalistic literature (reports, advertorials, interviews, journalistic accounts); general encyclopaedia entries; secondary school textbooks; explanatory articles/books.

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[10] NAATI 2016.

In order to define language proficiency requirements for translators at different levels of expertise, the NACT model matches the competence levels in translation with language competence levels as identified in the CEFR. In particular, the focus is on reading comprehension skills in the source language (SL, henceforth) and written production skills in the target language (TL, henceforth). In the documentation made available so far only levels A1, B2 and C have been defined (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. – CEFR proficiency levels expected
for NACT translation competence levels.

COMPETENCE LEVEL IN TRANSLATION (NACT)	LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CEFR)
A1	B2 (SL reading comprehension) and C1 (TL written production)
B2	C1 (SL reading comprehension) and C2 (TL written production)
C	C2 (SL reading comprehension) and C2 (TL written production)

Furthermore, the framework sets forth a number of descriptors for the following translation sub-competences: cultural, world knowledge and thematic; instrumental; translation service provision; translation problem solving. The focus of the analysis presented in this paper will be on the cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence, which will be illustrated in detail in § 3.4.

3. TESTING THE NACT FRAMEWORK AGAINST REALITY IN NTSPs

3.1. *Data*

The data analysed for this study are translations into Italian of short fragments of texts in Spanish. They were produced by students as part of the following module final exams:

- Spanish into Italian translation, 2nd year, Degree in Linguistic Mediation and Intercultural Communication (L12, Undergraduate).
- Spanish into Italian translation, 3rd year, Degree in Linguistic Mediation and Intercultural Communication (L12, Undergraduate).
- Spanish into Italian translation, 1st year, Masters' in Foreign Languages for Business and International Cooperation (LM38, Postgraduate).

Table 2. – Genre and text types of assessment task according to competence level.

Nact Level	Title	Genre/Type	Topic	Degree Course
A1	*Guía del Camino de Santiago -- ¿Qué calzado es el más adecuado para caminar?*	Practical guide - Instructional	Tourism	2nd year - undergraduate
A1	*Instrucciones para estudiantes Erasmus entrantes*	Practical guide - Instructional	Administrative - University	2nd year - undergraduate
A2	*Cómo hacer migas manchegas al estilo tradicional*	Recipe - Instructional	Gastronomy	2nd year - undergraduate
A2	*La Úbeda más seductora*	Travel reportage - Description	Tourism	2nd year - undergraduate
B1	*Guía para el tratamiento de los Trastornos del Comportamiento Alimentario*	Patient information leaflet - Instructional	Medicine	3rd year - undergraduate
B1	*Trastornos de la Conducta Alimentaria -- La prevención desde la familia*	Patient information leaflet - Instructional	Medicine	3rd year - undergraduate
B1	*Un niño con autismo en la familia*	Patient information leaflet - Instructional	Medicine	3rd year - undergraduate
B1	*Guía básica para familias que han recibido un diagnóstico de autismo para su hijo o hija*	Patient information leaflet - Instructional	Medicine	3rd year - undergraduate
B1_B2	*Un poco de teoría sobre los TCA*	Patient information leaflet - Instructional	Medicine	3rd year - undergraduate
B2	*Tramitación de la tesis doctoral*	Practical guide - Instructional	Administrative - University	1st year – Masters'
B2	*Normativa de Doctorado Europeo*	Practical guide - Instructional	Administrative - University	1st year - Masters'
B2	*Programa de Doctorado en Lenguas, textos y contextos -- Criterios de admisión*	Practical guide - Instructional	Administrative - University	1st year - Masters'

As illustrated in § 1, the degree programs taken into consideration are TNSPs, in that their curriculums comprise translation modules but the intended graduate profile is not that of a professional translator.

Only translations produced by Italian native speakers were taken into consideration, in order to verify and assess their competences when translating into their mother tongue.

A total of 13 source texts (STs, hereafter) were selected and ascribed to a translation competence level based on the genre classification proposed by the NACT project (*Tab. 2*). Although genre classification into levels was not always straightforward (see § 3.2 for a discussion of classification problems), level progression generally reflects students' progress through their training. Accordingly, second and third-year students are assessed at levels A1-A2 and, respectively, B1-B2; Masters' students are assessed at level B2.

The analysis proposed uses the translation tasks set for students at different levels to reflect on the applicability of language proficiency requirements for translation competence levels as envisioned within the NACT model (§ 3.2). In § 3.3 genre classification per levels is commented upon in order to verify its practical applicability. Finally, in § 3.4 students' performance in the translation tasks listed in *Table 2* is measured in order to assess the acquisition of CWKT competence at different levels.

3.2. *Language proficiency*

The application of language proficiency requirements set out by the NACT model for each translation competence level (see § 2) may result problematic in TNSPs, especially as regards proficiency required in the foreign language.

If we apply the model to the teaching of translation into the mother tongue, the model sets a minimum language proficiency level of B2 in the foreign language. This has been established based on input by institutions that provide translation-specific programs, whose minimum language requirement for undergraduate admission is B2. In the case of undergraduate TNSPs, this may not always be the case. At Chieti-Pescara, for example, on admission undergraduate students are expected (but not required) to have a general language proficiency in their first foreign language corresponding to A2; the final competence level they reach on completion of the degree is B2. If the NACT model was applied, translation could only be taught at level A1, thus considerably restraining the professionalising ambitions of

the degree program. As far as translation into the foreign language is concerned, its teaching in the undergraduate programs would be completely ruled out since students do not reach C1 written production skills in the foreign language at this level. No particular restrictions apply at MA level, where students' skills in the foreign language should correspond to levels C1 (first year) and C2 (second year).

While the language proficiency levels proposed in the NACT model work as mere indications, they are a reflection of common practices based on the requirements of the profession and the job market. As a result, if TNSPs aspire to provide students with skills that are relevant for the translation profession, one change to be prioritised would be to increase students' language proficiency both at entry level and on completion of the degree.

3.3. *Text selection according to competence level*

As already noted (§ 2), the genre classification proposed by NACT offers examples of text genres students/translators should be able to translate at each competence level, with progression across levels being marked by increasing difficulty.

The main problem when classifying real texts arises from the criteria for classification being somewhat underdefined, especially as regards differences between sub-levels.

This is the case for level A, which includes a number of genres divided by text type (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative and instructional). Sub-levels A1 and A2 cover the same genres and the differences between the sub-levels are related to register, with A1 displaying texts in standard language and A2 including different registers characterised by stylistic and tenor variation [11].

The indications provided for operationalising the distinction between the two sub-levels are so far quite vague, making it difficult to assign a specific authentic text to a given sub-level. While register is definitely an important factor in describing the difficulties posed by a translation, its role in assessing competence levels would require a better definition, especially as it interacts with other parameters of translation difficulty. The following text extracts show some of the issues involved in competence level identification (the text in bold is for emphasis):

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[11] PACTE 2018, 119.

(1) INSTRUCCIONES PARA **ESTUDIANTES ERASMUS ENTRANTES** --
CURSO 2015/2016
TRÁMITES A REALIZAR A **TU** LLEGADA A LA UNIVERSIDAD DE
JAÉN [...]
Cuando llegues a la Universidad de Jaén debes presentarte en la Sección de
Relaciones Internacionales de la Universidad de Jaén, que se encuentra en el
Edificio C2, primera planta.
En esta primera visita:
- Se confirmará que tu documentación está correcta.
- Se te facilitarán los datos de tu **Coordinador Académico** en la Universidad
  de Jaén para que puedas contactar con él y tener una primera entrevista (ver
  apartado 2 de este documento).
- Te facilitaremos el nombre de usuario y la contraseña para usar tu cuenta
  TIC que te permitirá beneficiarte del acceso a la red de internet wireless
  UJA RIMUJA (desde tu propio ordenador), de todos los servicios previstos
  en la web de Campus Virtual (**certificados de notas**, reservas de salas de
  informática, activación de la cuenta de email, etc.) así como de la Docencia
  Virtual (donde se pueden consultar apuntes, participar en foros, se hace
  seguimiento didáctico, etc.).

(2) Guía del Camino de Santiago
¿Qué calzado es el más adecuado para caminar?
El calzado es una de las partes más importantes de nuestro equipo como pere-
grinos, ya que protegerá nuestros pies, sobre los que reposará todo el peso de
nuestro cuerpo y mochila durante muchas decenas de kilómetros. [...]
Si estás buscando qué calzado llevar al Camino de Santiago debes saber que
tienes varias opciones en el mercado, que deberás elegir dependiendo de la
época en la que recorras la **Ruta Jacobea**. El calzado habitual para los meses
fríos y templados son las **botas de montaña**, que nos aíslan del frío y nos suje-
tan el tobillo, aunque como contrapartida pesan mucho y calientan más el pie,
pudiendo generar humedad (para que esto no suceda hay que elegir un tejido
transpirable). Para los meses de verano, lo mejor es elegir unas buenas **zapa-
tillas de montaña**, con suelas específicas para senderismo, de un menor peso
y que consiguen que el pie transpire mejor, evitando las ampollas, aunque no
sujetan el tobillo como las botas. Para los días de más calor, algunos peregri-
nos optan por **sandalias cerradas** especiales para senderismo.

(3) La Úbeda más seductora
Un bar temático dedicado a **Joaquín Sabina** y los lugares favoritos de **Muñoz
Molina**. El mejor renacimiento andaluz, la sinagoga descubierta en 2010 y una
cuidada gastronomía.
Es la joya del Renacimiento andaluz, el sueño del arquitecto Andrés de Van-
delvira, y solo por seguir las huellas de este genio ya vale la pena la escapada a
Úbeda. Pero además la ciudad **jiennense** está en la **ruta sefardí**, y es el sur al

que volver en las canciones del cantautor Joaquín Sabina y la **Mágina imaginaria** en las novelas de Antonio Muñoz Molina, ambos nacidos aquí. [...]
Para entender la magia de la ciudad con un solo impacto, lo mejor es dirigirse a la calle del Prior Monteagudo y subir despacio la cuesta, aguantando las ganas de mirar por encima del muro. Al superarlo, aparece una plaza magnífica, trapezoidal, de una belleza sobria. Casi sorprende que por ella avancen vehículos y no coches de caballos, que los viandantes vistan con vaqueros y no con sombreros de ala ancha.

Extract (1) provides an example of administrative instructional text; (2) is an informal practical guide within a tourist website; (3) is a descriptive tourist text from generalist quality newspaper *El País*, displaying a more personal expressive style. Depending on the definition that one adopts for "standard register", the order in which the extracts are presented may be interpreted as one of decreasing standardisation, with administrative prose and journalistic personal genres lying on two opposite sides of the standard (formal/impersonal) – non-standard (informal/personal) register cline [12]. As can be seen, without a more specific definition of register, a classification of this type is at best tentative and in any case not very useful in defining translation difficulty and/or competence level. A number of questions remain open; among these:

- Is translating standard registers easier or more difficult than translating less standard registers?
- In what way do differences in register affect competence levels required for ST comprehension and TT production? One could easily argue that extract (1) is easier to comprehend, but more difficult to translate than (2). How are we supposed to account for differences of this kind in active *vs.* passive skills?
- What is the role of terminological specialisation and cultural references in genre classification? While extracts (1) and (2) pose little difficulty in terms of register, they may be terminologically more specialised than (3) (e.g., how are *estudiante entrante* and *certificado de notas* referred to in the Italian university system? What is the difference between *botas* and *zapatillas de montaña*, etc.). On the other hand, (3) is quite dense in cultural references (e.g. *Joaquín Sabina*, *Muñoz Molina*, *Mágina*, *ruta sefardí*, etc.). How does this affect the competence level required for successful translation? From a teaching perspective, the translation of terms will require a focus on documentation skills and a reflection on the function of the translation and the identity of TT readers: e.g., in

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[12] E.g., Hatim - Mason 1990.

the case of extract (1), will a domesticating or a foreignising translation be more appropriate/useful for the Italian student doing his Erasmus in Spain? How does this consideration affect the translation of specific terms? As far as cultural references are concerned, students will need to recognise and comprehend references to Spanish culture. They will also have to reflect on which ones the TT readers will be familiar with and how the translation can help bridge the knowledge gap between ST and TT readers: e.g., will proper names such as *Joaquín Sabina*, *Muñoz Molina*, *Mágina*, etc. be known to the target audience? Will they need to be complemented by definitions or specifications in order to avoid loss of information on the part of TT readers? While all these issues are relevant and essential parts of translator training, it is somewhat more debatable whether (varying degrees of) terminological density should be assigned to higher or lower competence levels than (different kinds of) cultural references.

- At what level should differences in SL and TL genre conventions be tackled? One example is provided in extract (1) where – in keeping with Peninsular Spanish conventions – the reader is addressed with the direct informal address *tú* (e.g., *Cuando llegues a la Universidad de Jaén debes presentarte en* …). An analysis of comparable Italian genres shows that Italian university websites display a preference for impersonal forms (e.g., *All'arrivo a Torino è necessario registrarsi presso l'Ufficio Infopoint*; *Se lo studente intende sostenere esami oltre la durata del periodo di mobilità* …). Previous evidence shows that even advanced students of translation find these SL-TL differences elusive and often fail to implement them in their translations (see § 3.4.1) [13]. How can they be accounted for when assigning texts to a specific competence level?

- Variation within texts. The need to use authentic texts in the translation classroom cannot be questioned. However, one problem that arises when assigning texts to specific competence levels is that authentic texts may display high degrees of internal variation in terms of register, terminological density, and presence of cultural references – all aspects that have been associated with translation difficulty in this discussion. How should variation be dealt with when categorising texts?

While these questions wait for more theoretically grounded solutions, extracts (1) and (2) were assigned to competence level A1, considering that their "standard" register allowed for easy comprehension and that terminology – while present – was not particularly dense or specialised. The

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[13] E.g., Piccioni - Pontrandolfo 2017.

decision did not consider the issue of the translation of genre conventions, since it can be considered an optional translation shift, especially at this competence level[14]. Extract (3), on the other hand, was assigned to competence level A2, because of its more expressive style and the density of the cultural references it contains. However, the lack of more specific indications leaves room for great subjectivity in text selection, a problem that will need to be tackled in future research.

Sub-level categorisation proves slightly less subjective at level B, where sub-levels are defined in terms of levels of specialisation, with levels B1 and B2 corresponding to non-specialised and, respectively, semi-specialised texts. The following text extracts were assigned to level B (the text in bold is for emphasis):

(4) Guía para el tratamiento de los **Trastornos del Comportamiento Alimentario**
CONSEJOS PARA PREVENIR LOS **TCA** DESDE LA FAMILIA
   - La familia es el pilar fundamental de la formación y la educación y juega un papel esencial en el desarrollo de la persona. Una buena comunicación entre sus miembros aclara muchas dudas y resuelve muchos problemas.
   - No es conveniente que **transmita**, ni que **acceda** a que **su** hijo tenga, actitudes de rechazo ante personas con cuerpos diferentes al considerado "normal", porque ¿Qué es la normalidad en un cuerpo?

(5) QUÉ SON LOS **TCA**
Los TCA son manifestaciones de una **perturbación psicológica de la personalidad** que pueden llegar a poner en riesgo la vida de las personas que los padecen. La **Organización Mundial de la Salud** ha clasificado la **anorexia** y la **bulimia** como **trastornos mentales y del comportamiento**. Afectan de forma característica a la población femenina entre los 15 y los 18 años, pero en la actualidad **se observa** un aumento de su **aparición** entre población masculina y edades más tempranas. [...] Los TCA más frecuentes son la **anorexia nerviosa**, la **bulimia nerviosa** y el **trastorno por atracón**, también conocido como **comedor compulsivo**.

(6) Tramitación de la **tesis doctoral**
Terminada la elaboración de la **tesis doctoral**, el **doctorando** entregará en la **Sección de Tercer Ciclo** (Casa del Estudiante) junto con la **solicitud de depósito**, la siguiente documentación:
   e) Dos informes sobre la relevancia de la tesis y procedencia de su presentación emitidos por **especialistas doctores** con experiencia investigadora acreditada. Dichos especialistas serán designados por la **Comisión Académica** del programa, oídos el **director o directores**, y deberán pertenecer a

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[14] Vinay - Darbelnet 1958 (1995).

> **instituciones de educación superior** o de investigación externas a la UVa y a las colaboradoras en la Escuela o programa (ambos especialistas no podrán ser de la misma institución).

All three extracts are from texts meant for a lay audience within a given specialised field: (4) and (5) are from the same patient information leaflet, while (6) is part of legal/administrative instructions in the academic sector. Assignation of (4) to competence level B1 was straightforward based on external criteria (expert-non-expert communication in the medical sector) and on low terminological density. In spite of belonging to the same text and sharing the same communicative features as (4), extract (5) displays a higher degree of specialisation with higher terminological density (e.g., *anorexia nerviosa*, *bulimia nerviosa*, *comedor compulsivo*, etc.), long multi-word terminological units (e.g., *perturbación psicológica de la personalidad*, *trastorno por atracón*, etc.), and linguistic features associated with impersonal discourse such as nominalisations (e.g., *aparición*), reflexive passives (e.g., *se observa*), etc. For this reason, classification was not clearcut and it was decided to assign it to an intermediate B1_B2 level. Finally, extract (6) was considered as requiring competence level B2, mainly due to the high incidence of specialised terms referring to SL culture and institutions (e.g., *Comisión Académica*, *director [de tesis]*, *Tercer Ciclo*, etc.) for which the translator will need to find a corresponding term in the TL culture.

Summing up, these examples show that sub-level categorisation at level A suffers from the discriminating criteria (register and style) being under-defined for the purposes of competence description. At level B, on the other hand, the main problem is associated with variation within texts, especially where these are configured as macro-genres whose composing parts display different levels of specialisation.

3.4. *Cultural, world knowledge and thematic competence: definition, identification of CWKT units and acceptability criteria for their translation*

The NACT model defines CWKT competence as "an individual's mobilisation of knowledge about their own culture and the foreign culture involved, as well as of (universal) world knowledge and thematic knowledge corresponding to specific fields, to solve translation problems" [15]. Cultural and

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[15] PACTE 2018, 120.

world knowledge is relevant at all levels and progression between levels has been established based on level of difficulty of cultural references and their degree of explicitness. At level A cultural and world knowledge encompasses: knowledge of basic aspects of the foreign culture (environment; cultural heritage; social organisation); secondary-education level knowledge of one's culture (environment; cultural heritage; social organisation; models of behaviour, values, and ideas); secondary-education level of world knowledge (environment; cultural heritage; social organisation).

Thematic knowledge, on the other hand, acquires relevance starting at level B1 with the translation of semi-specialised texts. At this level, basic thematic knowledge is required in at least one of the following fields: legal and administrative; economic and financial; technical; scientific.

Our analysis focuses on CWKT units, defined as ST items that identify entities in:

- SL culture (cultural references), e.g. *migas manchegas*, *ruta sefardí*, *renacimiento andaluz*, *RD 99/2011*, etc.;
- a given thematic field (at different levels of specialisation) both in the SL and TL (thematic units usually correspond to terms in a given specialised domain): e.g., *Trastornos del Comportamiento Alimentario*, *Trastornos del Espectro Autista*, *tribunal evaluador*, *grado*, *expediente académico*, etc.;
- general world knowledge, e.g. *Organización Mundial de la Salud*.

Based on general consensus in translation studies,[16] our analysis considers CWKT units also translation units requiring knowledge of SL and TL genre conventions. Examples of these are language- or culture-specific preferences for formal *vs.* informal forms of address in patients' information leaflets, or personal *vs.* impersonal forms in administrative prose.

For the purposes of the analysis, CWKT units were identified in each of the texts considered and their translation was judged as one of: acceptable, partially acceptable, unacceptable. The judgement was based on the following criteria:

- Acceptable solutions: the translation reveals comprehension of the ST item and renders it with a TL unit that reflects the meaning of the ST unit with thematic accuracy and in accordance with the cultural and linguistic conventions of the TL.
- Partially acceptable solutions: the translation reveals comprehension of the ST item and renders it with a TL unit that reflects the meaning of the ST unit with thematic accuracy but violates the cultural and linguistic conventions of the TL.

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[16] E.g., Nord 1988; Cao 1996; PACTE 2003; Molina 2006; Katan 2008; EMT 2009.

• Unacceptable: the translation reveals lack of comprehension of the ST item.

A further element that will be taken into consideration is the role of the instrumental and strategic competences in determining the outcomes of the CWTK competence. As indicated by Hurtado Albir and Olalla-Soler:

> la enseñanza de la competencia cultural del traductor no tiene por objetivo que los estudiantes posean todos los conocimientos sobre las culturas de trabajo ni que se comporten como miembros de esas culturas, sino que los estudiantes sean capaces de utilizar las fuentes de documentación de manera efectiva, que posean los conocimientos culturales necesarios para identificar referencias culturales y que posean las habilidades necesarias para trasladarlas adecuadamente de acuerdo con el encargo de traducción. [17]

3.4.1. Results

The first aspect considered in analysis is the number of different types of CWTK units in the texts under scrutiny at each competence (sub-)level.

As shown in *Figure 1*, progress at level A is marked by an increasing presence of cultural terms. The presence of terminological units in A1 is associated with the presence of everyday thematic units. At level B, progression is marked by terminological density. This confirms the validity of text selection for each (sub-)level since the density of CWTK units is in line with NACT competence levels.
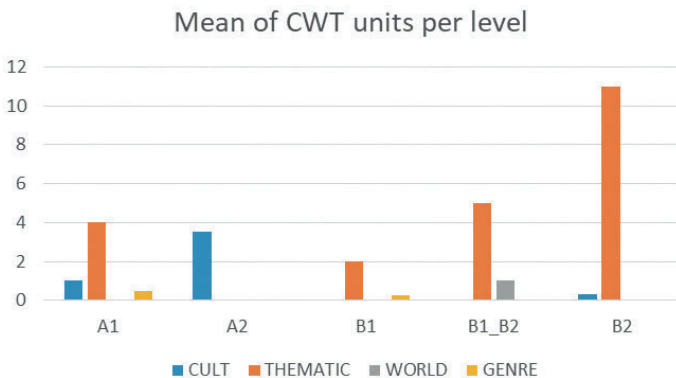
Figure 1. – Number of different types of CWTK units in the texts under scrutiny at each competence (sub-)level.

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[17] Hurtado Albir - Olalla-Soler 2016.

*Figure 2. – Proportion of acceptable (A), partially acceptable (P)
and unacceptable translations (UN) for the CWTK units at level A.*

*Figure 3. – Proportion of acceptable (A), partially acceptable (P)
and unacceptable translations (UN) for the CWTK units at levels B1 and B1_B2.*

*Figure 4. – Proportion of acceptable (A), partially acceptable (P)
and unacceptable translations (UN) for the CWTK units at level B2.*

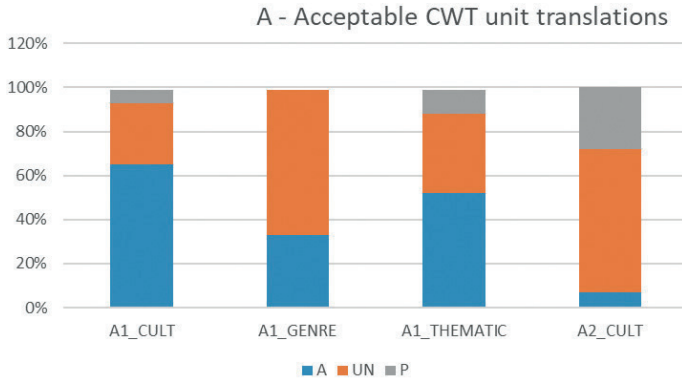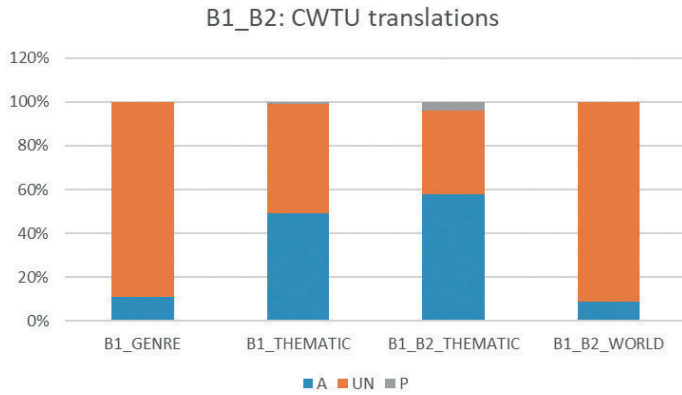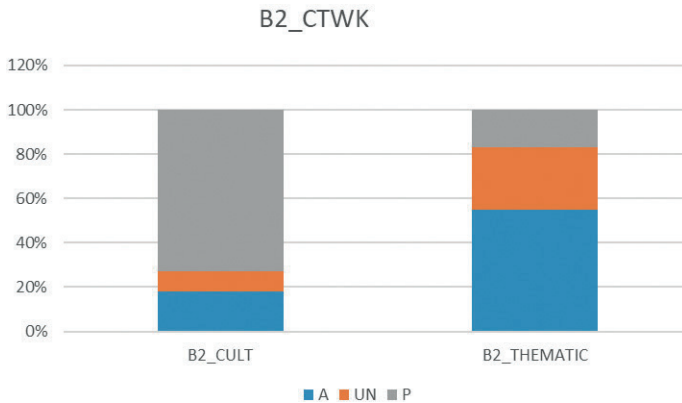*Figures 2*, *3* and *4* show the proportion of acceptable, partially acceptable and unacceptable translations for the CWTK units identified ate different competence levels.

At competence level A, the type of units that result more problematic are genre conventions and cultural references. Remarkable differences are observed in the translation of cultural references at levels A1 and A2: as shown in *Figure 2*, at level A1 cultural references yield acceptable translations in 65% of cases, whereas at level A2 the proportion of acceptable solutions drops to 7%, with 65% of translations being unacceptable and 28% only partially acceptable. This shows how the higher density of CKUs makes it more difficult for students to activate their knowledge and strategies to arrive at acceptable solutions. Another aspect that may be affecting results is that at this level students only have access to printed dictionaries and parallel texts from classwork as documentation sources, which greatly limits their access to the information they may need to disambiguate CKUs in the ST and produce acceptable solutions in the TT. The least problematic units are TKUs at level A1, which at this stage refer to thematic knowledge in non-specialist domains.

At B1 and B1_B2 levels genre conventions and WKUs are the most problematic with around 90% of translations marked as unacceptable. Somewhat counterintuitively, TKUs reflect a positive tendency as one moves from B1 to B1_B2 levels, with the proportion of acceptable solutions increasing from 49% in B1 to 58% in B1_B2. Individual variables (e.g., the availability of appropriate parallel texts) may be at play here, confirming the centrality of documentation skills and sources in the translation of CWTK units.

At level B2 students struggle to arrive at acceptable solutions for the translation of CKUs since the vast majority of solutions (73%) are only partially acceptable. TKUs, on the other hand, are translated correctly or at least in a partially acceptable way in 72% of cases. Again, this can be partly explained in terms of students' access to documentation sources, since at this level students were allowed to use the Internet for completing their exams. Furthermore, given the semi-specialised nature of the translation task a strong focus on thematic/terminological difficulties may have distracted students from the cultural units of the text.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The present study has proposed an evaluation of Spanish translation teaching in NTSPs at both undergraduate and Masters' level at the Depart-

ment of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Chieti-Pescara. Translation teaching provision was assessed against the NACT translation competence levels in terms of its design, contents and outcomes. In particular, the analysis focused on: language proficiency requirements; criteria for text selection according the translation competence level; acquisition of CTWK competence at different levels.

The study has provided useful indications in two directions. On the one hand, both strengths and weaknesses in the Spanish translation provision at Chieti-Pescara have emerged, which should be taken into consideration in course review. On the other, aspects of the NACT model have been highlighted whose operationalisation and application can be problematic in real teaching contexts.

As far as the first area is concerned, the evaluation carried out shows that the course design across years/competence levels closely reflects indications in the NACT framework, with undergraduate provision covering competence levels from A1 to B1 (and B1 progress) and Masters' provision covering level B2. A further positive note regards the outcomes of error analysis of the translation of CTWKU's, which show that – when given specific training in documentation skills and access to appropriate documentation sources – students tend to provide (at least partially) acceptable translation solutions.

On the negative side, however, it has been noted that teaching large groups of students with limited access to IT resources can hinder the acquisition of translation competence and students' performances in translation tasks. As already noted, the acquisition of CWKT competence relies on equipping students with the skills needed both for activating existing knowledge and for accessing the relevant sources to acquire new knowledge. This means that CWKT competence cannot be separated from instrumental competence and access to appropriate sources of documentation. In this light, the material conditions in which translation training is carried out – especially at undergruaduate level – do not seem to give students a fair chance to acquire the competences required of them. While the availability of smartphones with internet access has greatly improved teaching and learning opportunities in the traditional classroom, the fact that their use is not allowed during exams at undergraduate level means that exams, as they stand now, may not reflect the full extent of students' competences. Indeed, working with smaller groups of students in computer labs for both teaching and assessment would ideally provide a solution to these problems; yet, it is hardly viable or realistic when applied to some NTSPs and popular language combinations. Given the limited

resources available for teaching (both in terms of staff and infrastructure), better learning outcomes could come from devising new, creative ways of incorporating available technology (students' smartphones and tablets) into the translation classroom and overcoming the traditional diffidence against the potential shortcuts provided by the use of technology in assessment tasks.

Further problems were identified in the content of translation teaching. Results show that cross-linguistic variation in genre conventions proves difficult to grasp, especially at A level, where its teaching is better avoided. In addition, when dealing with texts which are dense in terms of specialised terminology, students do not perform as well in the translation of other types of knowledge units (e.g., cultural references). This compartmentalisation of knowledge reflects shortcomings in the development of the strategic sub-competence, which should include (among other things) all the processes regulating the appropriate identification and solution to concrete translation problems [18]; an aspect that should be given more space in translation teaching.

A final problematic aspect that emerged regards the mapping of translation competence levels against language proficiency levels as indicated in the CEFR. As pointed out in § 3.2, with their B2 language proficiency level on graduation, undergraduate language students at Chieti-d'Annunzio could only aspire to translation competence level A1 when translating into their mothertongue; they could not approach translation at all when translating into the foreign language. This calls for an urgent reconsideration of admission requirements and curriculum review in order to allow students in TNSPs to attain higher levels of language proficiency. The acquisition of specialised professional-level competences becomes crucial in today's globalised translation market, increasinlgy relying on machine translation and other CAT tools. In this context, students in TNSPs will find themselves competing against graduates in other disciplines who can provide adequate translations in their specialist subject area, having received limited but targeted language training or having spent some time abroad. It is therefore essential for language graduates to reach very high levels of language proficiency if they are to gain a competitive advantage over other graduates in the job market.

Finally, assessing Spanish translation provision in Chieti-Pescara has proven useful in putting the NACT framework to the test. As indicated by project participants, the aim of establishing descriptors for competence

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[18] Kelly 2002.

levels in translation is a very ambitious one, also in consideration of the great variation existing in both translator training and in the translation profession in different contexts. In § 3.3 it has been noted that the model and descriptors are still underdefined in certain respects, most visibly perhaps in the indication of genres, registers and text types to be taught/translated at each level. However, our analysis has shown that the model does reflect current practices in translator training and provides a useful and long-needed framework for guiding translation pedagogy. To conclude, the present study has focused only on translator training in one specific institution and in one specific language cambination: consideration of teaching practises in use in other institutions and for other language combinations will contribute to a better understanding and assessment of the NACT model.

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