

# RESEARCH ON THE FORMATION OF TRANSLATORS' COMPETENCE IN UNIVERSITIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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## Abstract

This research intends to analyze the formation of translators' competence in universities from the perspective of knowledge management in the information age. This article follows the translation competence model formulated by PACTE (2003), which is consisted of five sub-competences: the bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, knowledge about translation sub-competence, instrumental sub-competence, strategic sub-competence. In order to develop the five translators' sub-competences, this research formulates the teaching model of knowledge management for translators', which includes the curriculum design, and the six rudimentary phases of personal knowledge management (search, identification and acquisition of information, and organization, application and optimization of the knowledge). We carry out an empirical research of the knowledge management teaching mode in translating class. From the students' practice results and surveys, we evaluate its' results in the formation of translators' competences.

**Keywords:** *Knowledge management, translation teaching, translators' competence, competence formation.*

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## 1. Introduction

In the era of big data, the rich Internet platforms provide large amount of information for the translators; meanwhile, due to the information resources of the sea, the knowledge data shows that the overall body is large, so the knowledge management shows importance. The formation of translators in universities is also beginning to show new features with the fast development of technology and information. The texts to be translated contain information of large amount and rapid-changing. Moreover, the content is of wide range of coverage, and is more professional, more complicated and more difficult to translate. Thus, the universities should explore new ways, like integrating knowledge management (KM) in translation teaching, in order to broaden the knowledge, form students' ability to use computer assisted tools and make them informed of up to date information.

## 2. Knowledge management

Knowledge is the key resource of the information age. The term "knowledge management" is used to describe everything from the application of new technology to the broader endeavor of harnessing the intellectual capital of an organization. (Sallis & Gary, 2012) KM has gained popularity in both the business and education arenas, and advances in information technology have served to assist in developing and implementing KM strategies.

Making a distinction between two different but important types of knowledge is crucial to KM, and to using knowledge effectively in the organizational context. The two types of knowledge are generally known as explicit and tacit. (Serban & Luan, 2002) Explicit knowledge is documented information that can facilitate action. It's easy to articulate, write down, and share. Because explicit knowledge is the knowledge that can be most easily articulated and transmitted, it is sometimes called codified or declarative knowledge, with translation related examples including language and grammar rules, terminologies, reference material, legal requirements, contact and industry information, and documented information on the subject matter. Tacit knowledge is know-how and learning embedded within the minds of the people in an organization. It involves perceptions, insights, experiences, and craftsmanship. Tacit knowledge is personally and socially embedded. Translation related examples here

include being able to grasp the context of the target communication situations, understanding meanings behind source text utterances and being able to make intuitive decisions in text production. (Risku, 2013)

Thus, based on the basic concepts of KM and our objective of integrating KM in the formation of translators' competence, referring to the definition formulated by Davenport *et al.* (1998) and Galbreath (2000), we define "Knowledge management" as following: Knowledge management combines the processes and application of technological tools to digitize and store, and make universally available, via electronic networks, the ongoing creation and transference of knowledge and wisdom. The knowledge to be managed includes both explicit, documented knowledge, and tacit, subjective knowledge.

### 3. Translation teaching in universities and translators' competence

In China, the translation teaching for university students has three major objectives: present the nature, the form, the basic concepts and the cognitive process of the translation; cultivate the ability of bilingual thinking and master the basic techniques and strategies of translating; realize the dual responsibility of technical training and bettering the Chinese language and foreign language level.

Nowadays, with the development of the internet technology and the information age, the translation teaching in the universities is beginning to show new features. The texts contain information of large amount and rapid-changing. Moreover, the content is of wide range of coverage, and is more professional, more complicated and more difficult to translate. Thus, the universities should explore new ways in their translation teaching in order to broaden the knowledge, form students' ability to use computer assisted tools and make them informed of up to date information.

This context also requires that universities help to form more professional and integral translators' competencies, in regarding of which, our research follows the translation competence model of PACTE (2003). PACTE starts from the concept of translation as a communicative activity directed towards achieving aims that involves making decisions and solving problems, and requires expert knowledge, like any other activity with these characteristics. According to PACTE, translation competence consists of the ability to carry out the transfer process from the comprehension of the source text to the re-expression of the target text, taking into account the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the target text readers. It is made up of five sub-competencies:

- **The bilingual sub-competence.** In other words, the translators should have the ability to communicate between the source language and the target language. This sub-competence is made up of pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge in the two languages.
- **Extra-linguistic sub-competence.** Predominantly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit, about the world in general and special areas. It includes: (1) bicultural knowledge (about the source and target cultures); (2) encyclopedic knowledge (about the world in general); (3) subject knowledge (in special areas).
- **Knowledge about translation sub-competence.** Predominantly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit, about what translation is and aspects of the profession. It includes: (1) knowledge about how translation functions: types of translation units, processes required, methods and procedures used (strategies and techniques), and types of problems; (2) knowledge related to professional translation practice: knowledge of the work market (different types of briefs, clients and audiences, etc.).
- **Instrumental sub-competence.** Predominantly procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation sources and an information and communication technologies applied to translation: dictionaries of all kinds, encyclopedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic corpora, searchers, etc.
- **Strategic sub-competence.** Procedural knowledge to guarantee the efficiency of the translation process and solve the problems encountered. This is an essential sub-competence that affects all the others and causes inter-relations amongst them because it controls the translation process. Its functions are: (1) to plan the process and carry out the translation project (choice of the most adequate method); (2) to evaluate the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose; (3) to activate the different sub-competencies and compensate for deficiencies in them; (4) to identify translation problems and apply procedures to solve them.

The PACTE translation competence model shows the competences that need to be formed for university students of translation specialty. As we can see from the content above, translators frequently have to be able to translate in a wide range of domains, of large quantity of information and need to be capable of using different instruments and know about the subject matter, therefore, the KM can play an important role in the formation of translators' competence and in the elevation of translating efficiency. In the next section, we will discuss how to form translators' competence based on KM.

#### 4. Formation of translators' competence based on knowledge management

Kastberg (2009a) first introduced the personal knowledge management in translation teaching, and later formulated six rudimentary phases of the knowledge management approach, which are identify, acquire, evaluate, organize, apply, optimize. But Kastberg (2009a, 2009b) only analysis the translator training from the student perspective. Our research intends to combine the personal knowledge management theory of Kastberg (2009a, 2009b) with the perspective of the translation teaching of teachers, and discuss the formation of translators' competence based on knowledge management.

The KM offers a new perspective for translation teaching and learning, which is different from the traditional form of teaching in many ways. In the traditional form of teaching, the focus is on the teaching material and content, the teacher is the knowledge source while the students only receive the knowledge from the teachers, the curriculum design centers on the process of teaching and students learn from the technology. Meanwhile, with the integration of KM, the teaching focuses on the students and the teachers serve as mentors and the curriculum design centers on the learning environment, and the students learn with the technology as a tool. In the translation teaching with the integration of KM, teachers need to help to use information technology to efficiently obtain information, but also train them to learn how to quickly systematize this information to solve practical translation problems. Moreover, it is important to mention that PKM is not taught as a separate and/or additional course but as an integrated part of the translation teaching and exercises.

##### 4.1. Curriculum design

The constructivism emphasizes on the design of the teaching environment instead of the design of teaching process. So, the very first step to implement the integration of KM in translation teaching in universities is to design an environment favorable for the students' research and learning, as well as their capability development. Based on the theory of (Chen, 2007), we think that the curriculum design includes the design of learning environment, the assignment, the resources, the instruments.

*Table 1. Curriculum design of translation teaching based on knowledge management.*

DESIGN ELEMENTS	CONTENT
assignment design	translation project as translation assignment
environment design	the knowledge supply based on the environment and its acquisition
resources design	the teaching strategies, the knowledge repositories
instrument design	instrument of computer assisted translation, instrument of knowledge management and evaluation, instrument of acquisition of information and instrument of cooperation

In the curriculum design, the translation teaching is based on translation projects in order to motivate the students' ability of creation, research and cooperation. The environment design means creating the knowledge supply based on the environment and its acquisition. The resource design is offering the students the translation cases, the necessary tool and information bank in order to acquire knowledge and solve problems. The instrument design is teach students to use computer assisted translation platforms and other software, the information search engines, the concept map etc., to realize the personal knowledge management.

##### 4.2. Search, identification and acquisition of information

The search, identification and acquisition of information consists of the first three phases formulated by Kastberg (2009b). When teachers given the students an assignment of translation, they need to guide them to acknowledge, recognize and identify the personal information deficit with respect to the assignment at hand, which includes the terminology, the subject matter, the deficiency in the use of translation strategies, etc. Students can use a series of instruments to search and acquire the information they need: search engines like Google, Baidu, Yahoo; database like Scopus, Google scholar, Springer, CNKI; online dictionaries like Dictionary by Merriam-Webster, Collins Online Dictionary for English,

and Xinhua Dictionary for Chinese; online open courses such as MOOC, Coursera, edX; online encyclopedias such as large Encyclopedia Britannica, Bing Encyclopedia, Interactive Encyclopedia, Wikipedia; community question and answer sites, such as Zhihu<sup>1</sup>, Yahoo Knowledge, Quora, Stack Overflow, etc.; etc.

Teachers should offer all these resources to the students, teach them the using instructions and, most important of all, guide them to evaluate and select the information carriers which are relevant to them with regard to this particular assignment, in order to accomplish the assignment as a professional translator.

### 4.3. Organization, application and optimization of the knowledge

With the information identified and collected, the students need to organize, apply and optimize the knowledge so as to enrich their personal knowledge bank. In these phases, the students are also faced with difficult tasks such as how to organize the large amount of knowledge which are not familiar to them, how to select the appropriate solution of the target language when the new acquired knowledge are still fragmented, and how to form an efficient knowledge management procedure in order to accomplish the text revision task after the translation. In order to solve these problems, a series of instruments are necessary. Risku, Dickinson and Pircher (2010) identify different KM tools and instruments for these forms of knowledge in a translation context. The management of explicit knowledge is supported by various instruments and methods, like glossaries, translation memories, style guides, newsletters, handbooks, websites, knowledge portals, topic maps, customer relationship management tools, and project management tools. The non-codifiable, tacit aspects of translation are supported by personal experience with and exposure to different communication situations, access to discussion forums such as mailing lists, online communities, translator associations, courses and collaboration tools, but also by taking part in mentoring and storytelling projects.

The teachers need to guide the students to select the appropriate instrument, in order to solve the translation problems and form their competence at the same time. The personal space of online dictionaries and terminology application such as SDL Trados and memoQ can register the new words and terminology of the students, which is an effective way to enrich the vocabulary of the translators and better their bilingual competence. The concept map and knowledge repositories can help the students to manage different subject matter, open their horizon and form their extralinguistic competence. The translation project management tools offer the students a space for group cooperation and problem-solving practices, in order to form their strategic sub-competence. KM applications such as OneNote or Mar-ginNote can help the students to record and analysis the information of translation theory and techniques, which form their know-about competence.

## 5. Case study

During the autumn semester of 2021-2022, the author launched a case study to the 23 students of China Foreign Affairs University who specialize in Spanish Philology and Spanish-Chinese Translation, to integrate the smart-classroom teaching, the translation technology and KM technology, in order to analysis the teaching result and its functions in the formation of their translator competence. After one semester of empirical research, the author designed and distributed a questionnaire among the students, and results showed that the students think that the translation technologies that help translation practice from high to low are translation memory (36.36%), terminology management (22.73%), machine translation technology (18.18%), and information retrieval (13.64%). The author also analyzed the translation work of students and found that the result showed the following improvements: first of all, the students showed more acquaintance with the subject matter, including in specialized areas such as diplomacy, energy, finance and industry; secondly, the translation showed more precision of the usage of terminology; thirdly, students domain the procedure of translation management and showed more willing to cooperate with others and more creativity in problem solving; fourthly, students also bettered their bilingual ability, including in the expression in Spanish and the use of translation techniques.

## 6. Conclusion

In the information age, the integration of KM in translation teaching is necessary to help the students form translator competence and meet the increasing demand of the market for translators. In the present research, we exposed the basic concepts of KM as well as the formation of translators' competence in universities. We also discussed how to form translators' competence based on knowledge

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.zhihu.com/signin?next=%2F>

manage from the teaching perspective and the student perspective, namely, the curriculum design, the search, identification and acquisition of information and the organization, application and optimization of the knowledge. In this process, the teachers should play the role of guide, while the students are the main participants of learning. According to the results of the case study, the integration of the KM in translation teaching can notably better the students' bilingual ability, help them domain the translation technology and instruments, widen their extralinguistic knowledge and form the conscience and ability of group work and problem solving.

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