A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING DIGITAL TRANSLATION COMPETENCE AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Digital tools have changed the way students translate texts. English language learners now use online dictionaries, machine translation, artificial intelligence, corpora, and translation software in their studies. However, many students use these tools without understanding their limitations, risks, or ethical issues. This paper presents a framework for developing digital translation competence in higher education. The framework combines language ability, translation skills, digital literacy, critical use of machine translation, ethical awareness, and reflective learning. It also suggests how these skills can be included in the curriculum and assessed through practical tasks.

Keywords: *digital competence, translation competence, English language learners, machine translation, higher education*

1. Introduction

Digital translation tools are widely used by university students. English language learners often depend on Google Translate, online dictionaries, AI tools, and other digital resources when reading or writing academic texts. These tools can support learning, but they can also produce incorrect meanings, unnatural language, or misleading information.

For this reason, students need more than basic technical skills. They must learn how to choose suitable tools, check the accuracy of translated content, protect private information, and take responsibility for the final text. Digital translation competence should therefore be taught as part of language education rather than as a separate computer skill.

This paper proposes a framework that combines translation competence, digital competence, curriculum integration, and assessment.

2. Theoretical Framework

Translation competence is not simply the ability to speak two languages. It also includes understanding the purpose of a text, identifying translation problems, researching information, choosing suitable strategies, and revising the final translation.

The PACTE model describes translation competence as a combination of bilingual knowledge, cultural knowledge, translation knowledge, instrumental skills, and strategic ability. Strategic competence is especially important because it helps learners identify problems and select suitable solutions.

Göpferich also views translation as a problem-solving activity. According to this view, translators must think about the audience, purpose, genre, and context before making language choices.

The European Master’s in Translation framework adds professional skills such as terminology research, technology use, project management, machine translation, post-editing, and quality control.

Digital competence is also important. DigComp 2.2 includes information literacy, communication, content creation, safety, and problem-solving. In translation, these skills help students search for reliable sources, manage terminology, use digital tools, and protect data.

Machine-translation literacy means understanding when machine translation is useful, when it may fail, and how its output should be checked. Students must understand that fluent language is not always accurate language.

The framework is also based on social constructivism. Students develop translation competence more effectively through practical projects, teamwork, peer feedback, and reflection.

3. Digital Translation Competence Framework

Digital translation competence can be defined as the ability to translate meaning between languages by using linguistic, cultural, digital, and technological resources critically and responsibly.

The proposed framework contains six main areas.

3.1 Linguistic and intercultural competence

Students must understand the source text and produce a clear target text. They should use correct grammar, vocabulary, style, and register while considering cultural differences.

3.2 Translation problem-solving

Students should identify the purpose, audience, and possible difficulties of a text before translating it. They should also explain important translation decisions.

3.3 Digital research and terminology

Students need to use reliable dictionaries, corpora, databases, and parallel texts. They should compare sources and record important terms instead of depending on the first search result.

3.4 Translation technology

Learners should know how to use word-processing tools, terminology software, computer-assisted translation systems, and quality-checking tools. The main goal is not to master one program but to understand an effective digital workflow.

3.5 Machine translation and AI literacy

Students should compare machine-generated translations with the original text, identify mistakes, and revise the output. They should also know when machine translation or AI is unsuitable.

3.6 Ethics and reflection

Students must understand privacy, copyright, authorship, bias, and academic honesty. They should clearly report which tools they used and reflect on their translation process.

These areas are closely connected. Good digital translation competence requires both language ability and responsible technology use.

4. Curriculum Integration

Digital translation competence should be developed gradually throughout the curriculum.

At the foundation stage, students can compare short human and machine translations, practise dictionary use, evaluate websites, and identify common errors.

At the guided stage, learners can use corpora, terminology databases, and basic translation software. They may translate academic notices, webpages, summaries, or short specialist texts. They should also keep a research log showing the sources and tools they used.

At the advanced stage, students can complete group translation projects for real or simulated audiences. They may translate university information, public-service texts, subtitles, or international student materials. Team members can work as translators, editors, terminology managers, and quality controllers.

Teachers also need clear policies about the use of machine translation and AI. Students should know when these tools are allowed, when they must be reported, and when they are prohibited.

5. Assessment Model

Assessment should evaluate both the final translation and the process used to produce it. A good final text does not always show whether the student used reliable sources or understood the translation decisions.

A simple assessment model may include:

Area	Weight
Accuracy and language quality	25%
Audience, genre, and cultural suitability	15%
Translation strategy	15%
Digital research and terminology	15%
Use of machine translation and AI	15%
Revision and quality control	10%
Ethics and transparency	5%

Students can be assessed at four levels: emerging, developing, proficient, and advanced.

An emerging learner depends too much on literal or machine-generated translation. A developing learner produces understandable work but uses tools and sources inconsistently. A proficient learner creates a suitable translation, checks digital sources, and explains important decisions. An advanced learner works independently, manages risks, and uses technology strategically.

Assessment should include diagnostic tasks, classroom exercises, peer feedback, a final translation project, and a short reflection.

6. Conclusion

Digital translation competence is an important part of modern English language education. It includes language knowledge, translation strategy, digital research, technology use, machine-translation literacy, ethical awareness, and reflection.

Universities should not simply ban or encourage digital translation tools. Instead, they should teach students how to use them critically and responsibly. A well-designed curriculum can help learners become more independent, accurate, and ethical translators.

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