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The intersection of digital and translation competence in students of translation: problem areas and pedagogical interventions

Introduction

Translation competence (TC) models place high importance on information mining skills. Textual corpora have been a useful resource regarding language usage, but they may not be sufficiently developed or available, so translators need to be well-versed in using the Internet as a linguistic resource, with full awareness of its advantages as well as limitations. Translators have also been known to form informal *knowledge networks* (McDonough, 2007, 7) in their professional communities online, where they discuss their experience, values, translation problems and resources. Creating, sharing, finding information in the digital world are components of digital competence (DC), which is one of the key competences recognized within the European Digital Competence Framework for Lifelong Learning, needed for employment, personal development and social inclusion (Vuorikari *et al.*, 2022, 2, 5). Considering the relevance of DC and that it changes with technological advances, it is important that students understand it as highly relevant for the translation and interpreting profession, and integrate it in their self-concept as future translators. The translator's self-concept is related to strategic sub-competence (PACTE 2003), in the sense that translators are aware of their competences and can detect areas in which they need to improve. Following Muñoz Martín (2014, 31) it is understood as a dynamic, adaptive and evolving image activated by the task at hand. The role of training in developing areas of DC that can then contribute to the translator's self-concept has been noted by Pinto and Sales (2008, 67), who believe there is a need for "raising students' awareness about the importance and usefulness of information skills", and by Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow (2011, 207), who suggest that training may be a more important factor in the development of DC than experience. Since millennials are generally believed to be digital nomads, one of the starting questions is how they perceive their DC and to what extent they relate it to translation competence (TC) they acquire during their philological studies.



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Following the introduction, the paper offers an overview of the literature on translators' DC focusing on the role DC plays in the TC models and the problem areas in its development. The next section describes the research design, the sample and the instrument used in the research, and is followed by a presentation of the research results and a discussion of their pedagogical implications.

Digital and translation competences: overview of the frameworks

In this paper we adopt the definition of DC stemming from the Digital Competence Framework for Europe project (DigComp 2.2 by Vuorikari *et al.*, 2022) and the guide for its implementation (Kluzer *et al.*, 2018). In this context, DC includes five areas: 1) information and data literacy, 2) communication and collaboration, 3) digital content creation, 4) safety, and 5) problem solving. These are further broken down into 21 specific sub-competences. We focus on the first three areas, because students practice them as part of their translation assignments in all translation courses at the BA level.

Some instances of DC are present in all current componential TC models (PACTE, 2003; Kelly, 2005; EMT, 2009, 2017, 2022). The PACTE model defines the instrumental sub-competence as procedural knowledge of using sources, information and communication technologies (PACTE, 2003, 59). Under instrumental competence Kelly (2005, 32–33) includes the use of documentary resources, IT tools such as word-processors and programs for desktop publishing, databases, the Internet and email, as well as terminological research and information management. Professional standards such as ISO 17100 (2015, 6) also address areas of DC by stating that translators should have “competence in research, information acquisition and processing”.

The European Master's in Translation (EMT) 2009, 2017 and 2022 frameworks are complementary. The 2009 framework defines all types and components of TC (translation service provision – interpersonal and production dimension, language, intercultural (sociolinguistic and textual dimension), information mining, thematic and technological competence). The 2017 and the 2022 EMT frameworks focus on new demands, including those stemming from technological changes in the translation industry, artificial intelligence and social media. The 36 defined sub-competences from the four areas of TC (I translation, II technology, III personal and interpersonal and IV service provision) are aimed at enhancing the employability of future translation graduates (EMT, 2017, 2022).

In relation to some elements that were not elaborated within the earlier (PACTE, 2003 or EMT, 2009, 2017) definitions of instrumental and technological competences (cf. Nitzke *et al.*, 2019, 294), the EMT 2022 includes some changes. There are added references to additional IT tools and applications (editing tools, QA tools, an ability

to evaluate appropriate tools and machine translation). Moreover, one element is missing – data ownership and security (2017, 14).

It should be noted that the DC in the DigComp 2.2 framework are meant to be acquired throughout a person's lifetime, whereas TC are supposed to develop to some degree by the end of the MA cycle and then continue to develop, depending on the specific professional requirements. It is therefore important that students integrate DC into their understanding of what the translation profession entails. Which DC competences need to be included in translation curricula is a question that should be continually reconsidered, with an eye on the changes in the translation profession itself as well as on the needs of students.

Research methodology

The paper investigates how students report the level of their DC in the areas of 1) information and data literacy, 2) communication and collaboration, and 3) digital content creation. In the educational context under study, students typically practiced their DC (information mining, collaboration using Google Docs, Zoom and Moodle) while doing translation assignments outside the classroom. Following introductory instructions on the relevant DC, this was not discussed further in class unless the students required it. In addition, DC were not specifically tested nor graded. Considering that the in-class focus in all translation courses at the BA level was on textual aspects, and that students practiced their DC outside the classroom, we wanted to see if their perception of their DC is related to the number and type of translation courses taken, grades achieved in these courses and their perception of themselves as future translators.

The proposed hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: Students have an overall high assessment of their perceived DC.
- H2: Students' perceived DC have a statistically significant connection with the average grade in translation courses.
- H3: Students' perceived DC have a statistically significant connection with the number of translation courses taken.
- H4: Students' perceived DC have a statistically significant connection with their desire to work as translators in the future.
- H5: Students' perceived DC are statistically significantly correlated to one another.

The data was collected via an online questionnaire. The first part asked about the informants themselves: their age, gender, average grade during studies, average grade in the translation courses, number of translation courses taken, and if they would like to work as professional translators in the future. The second part was based on the Open

University's Digital Literacy Skills Checklist,¹ which was adapted and modified so as to reflect the digital practices of translators. In comparison with the original Skills Checklist, which has 30 questions grouped in four sections, the questionnaire used in this research has 25 questions grouped in three sections, each corresponding to one of the first three areas of DC. The students assessed the statements in the second part of the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale, thereby reporting how skilled they believed themselves to be with respect to various digital practices. The overall reliability of the questionnaire, calculated as Cronbach's alpha, is $\alpha=.900$, with each section's Cronbach's alpha as follows: 1: $\alpha=.822$, 2: $\alpha=.690$, 3: $\alpha=.704$.

The participants were 58 third- and fourth-year students of English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad (86.2% female, 13.8% male, average age 21.88, average grade during studies 8.69/10). There are six translation into L1 courses in the study programme, and they are distributed over the first, third and the fourth years of study. The first two are obligatory and they focus on the translation of fiction and journalistic texts, in this order, while courses three to five are electives and offer introductions to specialized translation in the field of science, the translation of official documents, and the translation of legal texts, respectively. The last course offered is on consecutive interpreting. Regarding the number of courses, one or two were taken by 13.8% of the students, three or four by 46.6%, and five or more by 39.7%. In relation to whether they see themselves as future translators, 31% said 'yes', 12.1% said 'no' and 56.9% answered 'maybe'.

The research was conducted in November 2018² and the informants were recruited in their classes. The researchers resorted to convenience sampling because they worked with these students and were familiar with their educational context. After agreeing to participate in the research, the students received a link to a Google Forms page which contained the questionnaire. All 58 participants completed the entire survey.

After it was collected, the data was coded and analysed with the SPSS software package. After an initial descriptive analysis, the statistical tests applied included Pearson's correlation, a one-way ANOVA and a two-way ANOVA.

Results

In order to test the first hypothesis – Students have an overall high assessment of their perceived DC – a descriptive analysis of the 25 items in the questionnaire was conducted (see Table 1 below).

1 <https://studylib.net/doc/18063576/being-digital-digital-literacy-skills-checklist>

2 This research was not published sooner due to issues related to COVID-19 beginning in 2020.

Table 1. Students' perceived understanding of digital practices

	Min	Max	M	SD
1 - Information and data literacy: I can...	2.91	5.00	4.1034	.56695
1. ... use online tools and websites to find and record information online.	1.00	5.00	4.0172	1.10010
2. ... know what information I can find on the web.	3.00	5.00	4.5172	.59946
3. ... know what information I can find in an online library.	2.00	5.00	4.0172	.88835
4. ... use advanced search options to limit and refine my search.	1.00	5.00	4.1207	.95656
5. ... use keywords commonly used in my discipline to search for information online.	2.00	5.00	4.3448	.80681
6. ... know when to change my search strategy or stop searching.	2.00	5.00	4.1897	.82626
7. ... filter large numbers of search results quickly.	1.00	5.00	3.7759	1.07676
8. ... scan / skim a web page to get to the key relevant information quickly.	1.00	5.00	4.1897	.94511
9. ... assess whether an online resource or person is credible and trustworthy.	3.00	5.00	4.3103	.68073
10. ... keep a record of the relevant details of information I find online.	1.00	5.00	4.1034	.94942
11. ... use social bookmarking to organize and share information.	1.00	5.00	3.5517	1.33997
2 - Communication and collaboration: I can...	2.43	5.00	3.8916	.61390
12. ... determine what categories of users I can expect to find online.	1.00	5.00	3.4483	1.11091
13. ... find a person online, for example an expert in my discipline, and establish their contact details.	1.00	5.00	3.8448	1.19651
14. ... use social networks as a source of information.	1.00	5.00	4.0000	1.07606

	Min	Max	M	SD
15. ... keep up-to-date with information from authoritative people or organizations by subscribing to RSS feeds.	1.00	5.00	2.6552	1.23618
16. ... add comments to blogs, forums or web pages, observing netiquette and appropriate social conventions for online communications.	1.00	5.00	4.1724	.92030
17. ... communicate with others online (forums, blogs, social networking sites, audio, video, etc.).	2.00	5.00	4.5690	.79719
18. ... work with others online to create a shared document or presentation.	1.00	5.00	4.5517	.84131
3 - Digital content creation: I can...	2.71	5.00	4.0887	.55285
19. ... choose the right tool to find, use, or create information.	2.00	5.00	3.8276	.84059
20. ... establish who owns the information and ideas I find online.	1.00	5.00	3.6379	1.05462
21. ... establish what online information I can legally re-use.	2.00	5.00	3.8621	.99909
22. ... use other people's work (found online) without committing plagiarism.	1.00	5.00	4.5172	.88340
23. ... cite a reference to an online resource (e.g. in an assignment) using the correct format.	2.00	5.00	4.4828	.75490
24. ... share files legally with others.	2.00	5.00	4.2586	.90922
25. ... write online for different audiences.	2.00	5.00	4.0345	.97271

The questions were divided into three groups, with a mean value for each group as a whole. It can be seen that the 11 questions in the first group were assessed highly, with only questions 7 (M=3.7759) and 11 (M= 3.5517) having a mean value under 4. The mean value for all the answers related to the area of information and data literacy is also higher than 4 (M=4.1034). As for the second group of questions, focusing on communication and collaboration, the mean value for the whole group is M=3.8916, with several individual questions that were assessed lower (questions 12, 13 and 15 had mean values under 4, with question 15 going as low as M=2.6552).

Finally, the third group of questions related to the skills of digital content creation had an overall mean higher than 4 ($M=4.0887$), and three individual questions were assessed just under 4 (19: $M=3.8276$, 20: $M=3.6379$, 21: $M=3.8621$). It can therefore be concluded that H1 (Students have an overall high assessment of their perceived DC) is confirmed.

H2 intended to test if the students' perceived DC has a statistically significant connection with the average grade in translation courses. Pearson's correlation test has found no significant results for the three groups of competences (1: $p=.337$, 2: $p=.205$, 3: $p=.257$), while for individual competences, only two statistically significant correlations were found for questions 20 ($r=.320^*$, $p=.014$) and 25 ($r=.292^*$, $p=.026$). Both questions are from the digital content creation group, and the correlations are positive, with the first one being of medium strength and the second of low strength. Since only two out of 25 questions have a statistically significant connection with the average grade in translation courses, H2 is rejected.

In the case of H3 (the connection between students' DC and the number of translation courses taken), the results of Pearson's correlation showed no significant results for three groups of competences (1: $p=.650$, 2: $p=.280$, 3: $p=.910$), while for individual competences only question 9 produced a statistically significant correlation ($r=.274^*$, $p=.037$). This hypothesis is therefore also rejected.

Regarding H4 (perceived DC has a statistically significant connection with the desire to work as translators in the future), a one-way ANOVA was used and only one statistically significant connection was found for question 22 ($F=3.335$, $p=.043$). As it is the only statistically significant result, H4 is also rejected.

H5 aimed to test statistically significant connections among all students' perceived DC. The Pearson's correlation for the three areas of DC shows that there are statistically significant correlations among all three. The correlation between the first and second areas of DC is positive and strong ($r=.715^{**}$, $p=.000$), as is the one between the first and third areas ($r=.766^{**}$, $p=.000$) and the second and third ($r=.713^{**}$, $p=.000$). A two-way ANOVA was used to investigate if there is any significant effect among the three areas of competences, and it was established that there is a significant effect of both information proficiency and communication proficiency on the creation of digital content (Table 2). The effect of information proficiency is high (.176 partial eta squared) and of communication proficiency is medium (.067 partial eta squared). However, the effect of the interaction between these two factors is not significant.

Table 2. A two-way ANOVA for groups of competences

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	8.204 ^a	3	2.735	16.020	.000	.471
Intercept	512.912	1	512.912	3004.803	.000	.982
Info_Proficiency	1.965	1	1.965	11.512	.001	.176
Communication_Proficiency	.663	1	.663	3.882	.044	.067
Info_Proficiency * Communication_Proficiency	.076	1	.076	.444	.508	.008

Since Pearson's correlation and the two-way ANOVA yielded statistically significant results, H5 is proven correct.

Discussion

The results show that students perceive their DC as developed, which is in line with other research done with students from Serbia (e.g. Topalov *et al.*, 2013). However, the same studies have shown that students conduct their search in a very limited manner and their knowledge of relevant and useful online resources is lacking. Other research shows similar findings. Students may rely on the same resources or search strategies for diverse types of problems (Massey *et al.*, 2011, 8), may not check the reliability of the sources they use for solving extra-linguistic problems as much as they should (Sycz-Opoń, 2019, 12), or spend a long time searching with inconclusive results (Kuznik *et al.*, 2018, 24). They can also focus too much on words and exact equivalences instead on suitable parallel texts (Zanettin, 2002, 3, 7), and although used to googling information they can overlook the significance of the text type, frequency of use of an expression (Monzó Nebot, 2008, 226) or geographic origin of the websites (Hirci, 2012, 230). The majority of such findings are regularly confirmed in the educational context of this study, so there seem to be significant discrepancies between student perceptions of their information mining skills and their actual skills. This situation could be improved through homework assignments targeted at information mining skills (cf. Zobenica, 2017) combined with the possibility for students to earn a certain number of points toward their grade for this skill.

We have also found that the better the students' grades, the better they self-evaluate their awareness of intellectual property ownership and their ability to write for

different audiences. We note that the students are explicitly taught to avoid plagiarism in a number of courses, as well as to translate for specified audiences, and are assessed on these abilities in their examinations.

It may seem surprising that there is no statistically significant connection between the number of translation courses taken and students' perceived DC (H3). However, a number of DC are practiced from the first translation assignment – specifically browsing and searching for information, evaluating sources, storing terminological equivalents and individual and group work on translations and glossaries in Moodle and Google Docs. Given that students felt that their DC developed even during their first course on translation, the number of courses does not seem to make a difference here. This also indicates the need to detect and focus on those aspects of information mining of which students are not aware.

We expected that the students who want to become translators (almost a third of the sample) would be reporting their DC either as high, because they attach importance to it, or low, because they fear it is not developed enough (H4). The absence of the expected correlations might indicate that students fail to make the connection between the digital world and professional translation practice.

Finally, the students' view of their own DC is highly correlated among and between different areas of DC (H5), which reflects their overall view of themselves as competent digital nomads. However, as previously stated, this might be in discrepancy with the whole spectrum of concrete digital skills expected of translators.

How well students cope with information mining can be established through assignments such as written reports or in-class presentations on terminological searches (sources they found, formulations of search queries) and occasional whole class info-mining competitions. Significant correlations between grades and questions 20 and 25 from our survey are also indicative – since both refer to the elements in the translation courses that were graded – that assigning points for manifested skills in translation-relevant DC is an effective awareness-raising tool.

Competences in digital content creation and communication and collaboration can be tested and developed if students share some of the knowledge they acquire in class (e.g. new terminological resources and literature on specific types of translation) in the existing online communities of translators. They might also make online profiles, either on a blog or social network, and work throughout the course on building, expanding and designing these, as well as collaborating with their peers and learning from their profiles. They could also use their profiles to collect and share useful links. Such in-class collaboration might increase their awareness of what participation in an online community of translators can do for them professionally.

Conclusion

The results presented in this paper show that the students from the sample have a high perception of their DC, but that this is not related to their perception of themselves as future translators, to their grades in translation courses, nor to the number of courses taken. The literature on the translation-related DC of students abounds with examples of where their competences may fall short. Both DC and TC are defined as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and in order to acquire translation-related DC students need to transform their intuitive skills to the level of explicit knowledge of the available tools and procedures, practice them and be able to form an opinion about them. Continuous changes in the digital world also necessitate continuous needs analysis for every cohort of students, as well as developing specific assignments and/or forms of assessment that will raise their awareness about those elements of DC that are relevant in the translation profession.

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The intersection of digital and translation competence in students of translation: problem areas and pedagogical interventions

Keywords: digital competence, translation competence, student translator's self-concept, translator training

The Current European Digital Competence Framework for Lifelong Learning (DigComp 2.2) includes five areas with 21 sub-competences, and most of them are included in the European Master's in Translation (EMT) 2009-2022 frameworks. Which of these will be included in the curricula depends on the level of the study program (BA or MA) and the needs of the students, who we tend to believe are digital nomads. In the educational context of our study various areas of digital competences (DC) are developed implicitly as part of translation assignments and are not specifically acknowledged and assessed. In this paper we investigate how the students perceive their DC and whether this is connected to the number and type of translation courses taken and their view of themselves as future translators. The data was collected via an online questionnaire. The informants (N=58) assessed 25 statements on a five-point Likert scale, thereby reporting how skilled they believed they were with respect to various digital practices. The data was coded and analysed with the SPSS software package. The statistical tests include descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, a one-way ANOVA and a two-way ANOVA. The results show that the students have a high perception of their DC, but no significant connection can be established between the pedagogical input and the students' perception in this regard. The paper ends with the analysis of the pedagogical implications of this finding for teachers and course developers.

Presečišče digitalne in prevajalske kompetence pri študentih prevajalstva: problematična področja in pedagoško posredovanje

Ključne besede: digitalna kompetenca, prevajalska kompetenca, samopodoba študenta prevajalca; usposabljanje prevajalcev

Trenutni Evropski okvir digitalnih kompetenc za vseživljenjsko učenje (DigComp 2.2) vključuje pet področij z enaindvajsetimi podkompetencami in večina jih je vključenih v okvire EMT 2009–2022. Kaj od tega bo vključeno v učne načrte, je odvisno od stopnje študija (dodiplomske ali magistrske) in potreb študentov, o katerih menimo, da so digitalni nomadi. V izobraževalnem kontekstu naše študije se implicitno

razvijajo različna področja digitalnih kompetenc (DK), in sicer kot del prevajalskih nalog. Te kompetence pa niso posebej priznane in ocenjene. V prispevku raziskujemo, kako študenti dojemajo svoje digitalne kompetence in ali je to povezano s številom in vrsto opravljenih prevajalskih predmetov ter pogledom na sebe kot bodoče prevajalce. Podatki so bili zbrani s spletnim vprašalnikom. Informatorji (N=58) so ocenili 25 trditev na petstopenjski Likertovi lestvici in na podlagi teh poročali o tem, kako vešči so, po njihovem mnenju, študenti glede različnih digitalnih praks. Podatki so bili kodirani in analizirani s programskim paketom SPSS. Statistični testi vključujejo deskriptivno statistiko, Pearsonovo korelacijo, enosmerno ANOVA in dvosmerno ANOVA. Rezultati kažejo, da imajo študenti visoko percepcijo svojih digitalnih kompetenc, vendar pa ni mogoče ugotoviti pomembne povezave med pedagoškim vložkom in percepcijo študentov. Prispevek se konča z analizo pedagoških implikacij teh ugotovitev za učitelje in snovalce predmetov.

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O avtoricah

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