

# A Book Review of Carla Quinci's *Translation Competence: Theory, Research and Practice*

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## ABSTRACT

Carla Quinci's *Translation Competence: Theory, Research, and Practice* offers an in-depth analysis of the complex and evolving concept of translation competence (TC), examining its theoretical underpinnings, empirical validation, and practical implications for translator education. The book provides a structured framework for understanding TC as a dynamic, multifaceted competence encompassing both cognitive processes and final translation products. Through an exploration of key models of TC and empirical research on its development, Quinci presents a comprehensive view of how TC can be defined, assessed, and cultivated. The author further innovates by combining process-oriented and product-oriented methodologies, offering a holistic approach to studying TC. Despite its significant contributions to the field, the book acknowledges certain limitations in its treatment of product-oriented research and its implications for the broader application of TC models. This review explores the strengths and weaknesses of Quinci's work, discussing its contributions to both translation theory and practice.

**Keywords:** *Translation competence, TC models, Translation process, Product-oriented research, Translation pedagogy, Translation quality*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Translation competence (TC) has long been recognized as a cornerstone of Translation Studies, serving as a foundation for both academic inquiry and professional practice. As Orozco and Hurtado Albir (2002) explain, "Translation competence is widely regarded as a multifaceted construct that goes beyond bilingual proficiency, encompassing linguistic, strategic, and cultural competences that interact dynamically during translation tasks." This definition underscores the complexity of TC and its relevance for navigating the challenges of professional translation in diverse contexts. In recent years, TC has also been framed as a multi-componential concept that integrates translation-specific, professional, and interpersonal competences, alongside language and cultural knowledge (Wu et al., 2020). This broader view reflects the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of translation, where a translator's effectiveness is tied to a range of cognitive, social, and technical abilities.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Historically, research on TC has predominantly focused on product-oriented approaches, assessing the quality of translation outputs based on feedback from recipients of the target text. However, this method has significant limitations. Product-based assessments often fail to capture the cognitive strategies and decision-making processes underlying the translation process, leaving critical aspects of a translator's competence unexamined. Recent developments in Translation Studies have emphasized the importance of process-oriented research to address these gaps. Muñoz Mart ́n (2014) highlights this shift, noting that "recent developments in translation studies emphasize the need for process-oriented approaches that investigate the cognitive mechanisms underlying translation, providing insights beyond what product-oriented research alone can offer." Moreover, Schwieter and Ferreira (2014) argue that "the development of TC benefits from cognitive and psycholinguistic approaches, offering novel insights into how translators acquire and process

linguistic information under task-specific conditions." These perspectives highlight the importance of exploring cognitive processes as part of a more holistic approach to TC research.

Advancements in assessment methodologies have further transformed the study of TC. Traditional score-based evaluations, which provide only a generalized measurement of performance, are being replaced by diagnostic tools capable of identifying specific strengths and weaknesses across sub-competences. Mei and Chen (2022) observe that "TCA has evolved from traditional score-based evaluations to diagnostic tools that provide detailed insights into students' strengths and weaknesses across multiple sub-competences." These innovations align with the growing recognition of the multifaceted nature of TC and its critical role in guiding targeted feedback and personalized translator training.

The evolving nature of TC also demands a reevaluation of how it is taught and cultivated in educational settings. Effective translator training programs must go beyond theoretical instruction to address the dynamic interaction of skills required for real-world translation challenges. Kiraly (1995) emphasizes this necessity, arguing that "effective translator training programs must address the dynamic nature of TC, integrating theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and adaptive strategies for real-world translation challenges." Similarly, Wu et al. (2020) underscore the need for training practices that account for translation-specific and professional competences, alongside interpersonal skills that are essential in collaborative translation contexts. This perspective highlights the need for comprehensive curricula that balance theory and practice, fostering the development of strategic, linguistic, and cultural competences.

In light of these developments, Carla Quinci's *Translation Competence: Theory, Research, and Practice* builds upon these foundational insights and presents a holistic framework for understanding and enhancing TC. By integrating process- and product-oriented research methodologies, the book addresses long-standing gaps in the field and offers actionable strategies for improving translator training and assessment.

### **3. CONTENT OF THIS BOOK**

Carla Quinci's book presents a comprehensive exploration of TC, structured into three main sections: theory (Chapters 1–2), research (Chapters

3–7), and practice (Chapter 8). Each section builds upon the previous one, progressing from theoretical definitions and models to empirical studies and finally to practical strategies for cultivating TC in educational settings.

#### **3.1 Section 1 Theory: Foundations of Translation Competence**

Section 1 of the book focuses on the theoretical foundations of TC (TC). It sets the stage for subsequent empirical research by exploring the evolution of TC as a key construct in translation studies (TS). The two chapters in this section provide a detailed examination of the definition, scope, and development of TC.

In Chapter 1, Quinci addresses the central question of what constitutes TC and how it can be conceptualized. She argues that TC is a multidimensional construct that goes beyond bilingualism and encompasses several interrelated competences. These include linguistic proficiency in both the source and target languages, cultural understanding, strategic problem-solving skills, and procedural knowledge that guides the translator's decision-making process. Quinci explores key models of TC, beginning with foundational works such as Harris's concept of "Natural Translation," which proposes that translation is an innate skill possessed by bilinguals, and Toury's socio-cultural approach, which views TC as a social construct shaped by norms and contextual factors. These early models provide a foundation for understanding TC as a dynamic and context-dependent ability. The chapter also introduces two prominent models of TC that have influenced modern research: PACTE's holistic model and Göpferich's componential model. PACTE's framework emphasizes the interdependent relationship between various sub-competences, including linguistic, cultural, strategic, and instrumental knowledge, while Göpferich's model focuses on the procedural aspects of TC and highlights the cognitive processes involved in translation. Quinci advocates for models that capture the dynamic, evolving nature of TC, suggesting that it should be treated as a skill that develops through experience and training rather than as a static set of predefined abilities. By grounding her discussion in both classical and contemporary models, Quinci offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of TC and sets the stage for the

empirical research presented in the following sections of the book.

Chapter 2 builds on the conceptual foundations laid out in Chapter 1 by exploring how TC develops over time. Drawing on longitudinal studies, such as PACTE's research and Göpferich's TransComp project, Quinci examines the developmental stages of TC, from novice to expert. In this chapter, Carla explores how translators progress through different stages of expertise, moving from reliance on explicit rules and conscious decision-making to more intuitive and automatic translation strategies. Quinci introduces the idea that TC evolves gradually through deliberate practice and exposure to real-world translation tasks, which foster the integration of linguistic knowledge, strategic skills, and cultural understanding. The chapter emphasizes the importance of feedback and reflection in the development of TC. As translators gain experience, they refine their problem-solving strategies, develop more sophisticated approaches to text analysis, and become more adept at managing translation challenges. This developmental perspective is essential for understanding how TC can be cultivated through training programs, as it suggests that TC is not a fixed trait but rather a malleable skill that can be improved over time. This developmental framework provides the basis for Quinci's empirical research, which investigates how TC evolves at different stages of expertise and how training interventions can accelerate the development of key competences.

### ***3.2 Section 2 Research: Empirical Investigation into Translation Competence***

Section 2 of the book presents an extensive empirical investigation into TC. Through a longitudinal study, Quinci examines how TC develops over time, employing both process- and product-oriented methodologies to assess translators at different stages of expertise.

In Chapter 3, Quinci outlines the research design and methodology behind her longitudinal study of TC. The study follows novice, intermediate, and professional translators over time, collecting data through various methods, including keylogging, screen recording, retrospective interviews, and questionnaires. These methods allow Quinci to capture both the cognitive processes involved in translation and the final translation products. Quinci identifies key variables that influence the development of TC, such as task

complexity, textual features, and translation quality. By triangulating data from multiple sources, she ensures the validity and reliability of her findings. This methodological rigor sets the stage for the detailed analysis of TC development that follows in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 shifts to product-oriented analysis, examining the linguistic and syntactic features of the translated texts produced by participants. Quinci uses metrics such as lexical density, syntactic variation, and readability to evaluate how these features correlate with different stages of TC development. The findings indicate that advanced translators exhibit more sophisticated lexical and syntactic choices, demonstrating a higher level of strategic competence. This chapter highlights the importance of analyzing both the cognitive processes and the resulting translation products. By combining process- and product-oriented approaches, Quinci provides a more holistic view of TC that captures both the decision-making strategies used during translation and the quality of the final output.

In Chapter 5, Quinci moves beyond textual analysis to discuss frameworks for translation quality assessment (TQA). She introduces a detailed typology of translation errors, classifying them according to their frequency and severity. These errors are linked to the development of TC at various stages of expertise. Quinci emphasizes that strategic competence is essential for minimizing errors and achieving functional equivalence in translation. The chapter underscores the role of translators' cognitive abilities in ensuring that the translation is both accurate and appropriate for the target audience. This chapter reinforces the importance of understanding TC as a combination of cognitive processes and product outcomes.

Chapter 6 integrates process-oriented data, such as keylogging and retrospective interviews, with product-based analysis. Quinci examines variables such as delivery time, self-revision practices, and perceived difficulty of translation tasks. The findings suggest that experienced translators are more efficient, spend less time on tasks, and engage in more effective self-revision. This chapter provides a nuanced view of how translators navigate the translation process, highlighting the cognitive strategies and decision-making processes that lead to high-quality translations. It further reinforces the argument that TC is best understood through an integrated approach that considers both process and product.

In Chapter 7, Quinci synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters to develop profiles of translators at various levels of expertise. These profiles illustrate how TC develops over time, from novice to professional. The chapter also provides practical guidelines for translator training, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that combines theoretical knowledge with real-world translation practice.

### **3.3 Section 3 Practice: Strategies for Developing Translation Competence**

Section 3 of the book focuses on the practical implications of Quinci's theoretical and empirical findings, offering strategies for developing TC through structured training programs.

Chapter 8 provides a comprehensive guide for improving TC through structured activities aimed at enhancing key translation skills. Quinci outlines exercises for improving reading strategies, such as critical reading, text analysis, and cultural contextualization. She emphasizes the importance of developing transfer skills, information literacy, and risk management strategies in the drafting phase. Revision practices are also a key focus of this chapter, with Quinci offering exercises designed to improve error detection, stylistic refinement, and overall coherence in translations. The chapter concludes by addressing the use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and other technological resources, highlighting their role in maintaining translation quality. Carla Quinci's *Translation Competence: Theory, Research, and Practice* is a significant contribution to the field of Translation Studies. By integrating theoretical, empirical, and practical insights, Quinci provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and developing TC. The book's focus on both product- and process-oriented research methodologies offers a holistic perspective that is essential for advancing the theory and practice of TC. While the book could benefit from further exploration of product-oriented research, its contributions to translator training, competence modeling, and quality assessment are invaluable. Quinci's work provides a robust foundation for further research and development in translation education and professional practice.

## **4. ADVANTAGE OF THIS BOOK**

To conclude with, this paper provides a comprehensive framework for understanding TC

and presents both theoretical and empirical insights into how TC can be defined, assessed, and developed. The book addresses a long-standing challenge in translation studies by integrating process-oriented and product-oriented approaches, offering a holistic perspective on TC. This evaluation will delve into the strengths and weaknesses of the book, highlight its innovative contributions, explore its impact on translation research, and discuss its implications for the future development of TC theory.

One of the major strengths of Quinci's book is its systematic structure, which is divided into three distinct sections: Theory (Chapters 1-2), Research (Chapters 3-7), and Practice (Chapter 8). This clear structure allows for a logical progression from theoretical foundations to empirical research and finally to practical strategies for enhancing TC in educational settings. By breaking down TC into its theoretical models, empirical validation, and pedagogical implications, Quinci provides readers with a well-rounded understanding of the concept, from abstract theory to concrete applications.

### **4.1 Holistic Model of Translation Competence**

Quinci's integration of both process-oriented and product-oriented research is a key strength of the book. Historically, research on TC has often been split into two distinct strands: process-oriented research, which focuses on the cognitive strategies employed by translators during the translation process, and product-oriented research, which evaluates the quality of the final translated text. Quinci's work breaks down this dichotomy, presenting TC as a dynamic, evolving construct that involves both the translation process and the product. This holistic model allows for a more comprehensive understanding of TC, making it more applicable to real-world translation tasks and educational settings.

Another strength of the book is its rigorous empirical foundation. Quinci's longitudinal study of novice, intermediate, and professional translators provides valuable insights into how TC develops over time. By using a combination of keylogging, screen recording, and retrospective interviews, the author captures both the cognitive processes and the translation products, offering a deeper understanding of how TC evolves. This empirical approach not only validates the theoretical models presented in the first section but also grounds her conclusions in real-world data, which is a

significant contribution to the field of translation studies.

The final section of the book focuses on practical strategies for developing TC. In Chapter 8, Quinci offers actionable teaching methods and exercises designed to improve core translation skills such as reading, drafting, and revision. These strategies are informed by the empirical findings presented in the previous chapters, ensuring that they are based on evidence and tailored to real-world challenges faced by translators. The inclusion of technology, such as Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools, further enhances the book's relevance for contemporary translation education, aligning with current industry practices.

A key feature of Quinci's work is her emphasis on strategic competence as an essential component of TC. She does not only focus on linguistic proficiency but also on the cognitive strategies and decision-making processes that contribute to effective translation. This broader view of TC is particularly valuable, as it acknowledges the complex and problem-solving nature of translation, going beyond mere linguistic accuracy to include aspects such as text comprehension, adaptation, and cultural mediation.

#### **4.2 Longitudinal Approach to Studying TC Development**

A notable innovation of this book lies in Quinci's longitudinal study, which tracks the development of TC over time. This approach is particularly valuable, as it allows for a deeper understanding of how TC evolves as a translator gains experience and exposure to different translation tasks. By examining novice, intermediate, and expert translators, Quinci offers valuable insights into how TC develops, which is crucial for improving translation education and designing curricula that foster the growth of TC at every stage.

#### **4.3 Use of Technology in Translation Pedagogy**

Quinci's discussion of the role of technology in translation education is another innovative contribution. By incorporating Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools and other technological resources into the study of TC, she highlights the importance of adapting translation training to the needs of the modern industry. This forward-thinking approach ensures that translation educators

are equipped to teach students the skills they will need in a rapidly evolving profession, where technological tools are becoming increasingly central.

Quinci's book has several important implications for the future of TC research. First, it provides a more integrated and dynamic understanding of TC. By combining process- and product-oriented research, she offers a model that is more reflective of the real-world complexities of translation. Future researchers in TC can build on this integrated approach, examining how cognitive strategies and translation outcomes are interlinked in various translation settings and tasks.

Furthermore, Quinci's work challenges the traditional product-oriented approach to TQA. While product assessments will always be important, her emphasis on process-oriented research encourages a more holistic and nuanced evaluation of TC. This shift in focus will likely influence future TC research and lead to the development of new methodologies and frameworks for evaluating translation quality, beyond traditional product evaluations.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

Carla Quinci's *Translation Competence: Theory, Research, and Practice* is a groundbreaking contribution to Translation Studies. The book offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and developing TC, combining theoretical depth, empirical rigor, and practical guidance. Quinci's integration of process- and product-oriented research, her longitudinal approach to studying TC, and her innovative use of technology in translation pedagogy (TP) all make this book a significant and timely resource for both researchers and educators.

Despite its strengths, the book could benefit from further exploration of product-oriented assessment methods and more accessibility for a broader audience. Nonetheless, Quinci's work provides valuable insights that will shape the future of TC research and education, offering a robust foundation for future studies and practical applications in the field of Translation Studies.

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