Theoritical Insights into The Relationship between Translation and Linguistic Intelligence

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Abstract:

Linguistic intelligence, theorized by Howard Gardner within the framework of multiple intelligences, has garnered increasing attention in translation studies, cognitive science, and applied linguistics. With the growing interdisciplinary nature of translation research in the 21st century, translation is no longer viewed as a mere mechanical transfer of linguistic forms, but rather as a complex cognitive activity reflecting the translator's integrated linguistic abilities. In this context, developing translation competence requires more than simply mastering two languages; it demands a sophisticated linguistic intelligence that fosters a profound sensitivity to nuances in vocabulary, grammatical variation, pragmatic meaning, and the organization of discourse across languages. This article emphasizes the importance of utilizing linguistic intelligence in the translation process, encompassing not only multilingual proficiency but also the advanced ability to navigate the cognitive, cultural, and contextual dimensions of interlingual translation.

Keywords: linguistic intelligence, translation competence, multiple intelligences theory

1. Introduction

Language is the essential tool that enables individuals and societies to exchange ideas, feelings, and experiences. It is the vessel in which knowledge, values, and cultures are formed. Through language, patterns of thought are shaped, and bridges are built between civilizations. Its role is not limited to transmitting information; it extends to building shared understanding and fostering human interaction. Therefore, possessing advanced language skills contributes to broadening the horizons of communication and supports the potential for learning, creativity, and influencing others.

Language and translation are intrinsically linked, as translation is fundamentally based on transferring meaning from one linguistic system to another while preserving accuracy, semantics, and context. Translation is not merely replacing words with their equivalents; it is a process of analyzing and deeply understanding the linguistic, semantic, and cultural structure of the source text, then reconstructing it within a different linguistic system to achieve equivalence in meaning and impact.

From this perspective, linguistic competence is the cornerstone of translation work, as it enables the translator to perceive subtle nuances of meaning, distinguish between levels of style, and understand cultural connotations and implications that may not be readily apparent on the surface of the text. Translation also requires the ability to rephrase flexibly, control grammatical structures, and select vocabulary appropriate to the context and communicative purpose.

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Herein lies the role of linguistic intelligence, a capacity that transcends superficial linguistic knowledge to become a refined linguistic sensibility, enabling its possessor to consciously engage with language as a complex symbolic system. Linguistic intelligence enables the translator to analyze discourse, infer implicit meanings, and reproduce the text in a way that achieves coherence and clarity in the target language. Translation thus becomes an applied field that clearly demonstrates the interaction between linguistic abilities and higher-order cognitive processes, where profound understanding meets precise expression simultaneously.

The cognitive demands placed on translators have attracted increasing attention from researchers, leading to the emergence of cognitive translation studies as an interdisciplinary field. Among the cognitive approaches that have garnered scholarly interest is linguistic intelligence. Linguistic intelligence falls under Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, first proposed in 1983. This theory encompasses several types of intelligence, such as mathematical, musical, and linguistic intelligence, among others upon which human thought is built and which assist in cognitive processes across various domains.

The Multiple Intelligences theory defines linguistic intelligence as a relatively independent intellectual ability. Gardner defines it as "the ability to hear, sort, produce, and manipulate the complexities of one language." For translators and interpreters, this definition needs to be expanded: their work requires the ability to perform these processes across languages and to manage the complexities of transferring between linguistic systems. This article examines linguistic intelligence in translation from multiple perspectives: as a component of translation competence, as a cognitive process activated in translation tasks, and as an ability that interacts with other types of intelligence in producing translated texts. By integrating the results of empirical studies and theoretical contributions, the article aims to strengthen the hypotheses presented, which suggest a relationship between linguistic intelligence and the translation process, by providing a comprehensive explanation of how linguistic intelligence manifests itself in translation practice and how understanding this relationship can enrich translator education.
The present study is centred aroud showcasing the realtionship between linguistic intelligence and translation throughout outlining the common features that can be found in both of them.

2. Defining the Core Concepts: Translation and Linguistic Intelligence

To delve into the relationship between translation and linguistic intelligence, it is first necessary to establish clear theoretical definitions of the two core concepts.

2.1. Translation:

Translation is one of the most complex linguistic activities undertaken by humans. It requires not only proficiency in two or more languages but also the ability to consider meaning, structure, and intent across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Conceptually speaking, we cannot find research on translation without including a definition of its concept. Therefore, apart from being a means of conveying a message from one language to another, translation is in fact a set of competencies that come together in a specific person within a limited time context to carry out the process of conveying this message through a set of steps. From the beknow definitions that are filling researches in translation, such as Nida’s, Newmark’s, Jakobson’s, Delisle’s,

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and others, Pym's explanation for the concept of translation is what I found much adequate to the core of this research. He defines translation as defines translation as "The ability to generate a series of target texts from a source text and select only one viable target text quickly and with justified confidence." Pym (2010).

The idea here is that the good translator is the one who can showcase a confident ability in rendering a lot of texts with different shapes from one source text, what makes them use all the necessary skills to give different target texts whose content is the same as to the source text. In such way, the good translator is not merely a person who understands the message to be conveyed from one language to another, rather, he is the one who can manipulate so many tools in favor of providing an equivalent in meaning and structure to the ST, and this what could be part of the translation competence.

2.2. **Translation competence**:

Translation competence is defined by H.Albir as "the underlying system of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes required to be able to translate". It entails a multifaceted complexity, necessitating a range of procedures and elements. It refers to the capabilities to effectively and accurately translate a source text from one language to another with a variety of skills, from knowledge of the source language to an understanding of the target language, expressing complex ideas clearly and faithfully and meeting specific requirements of the translation tasks. (P, B, P, 2020)

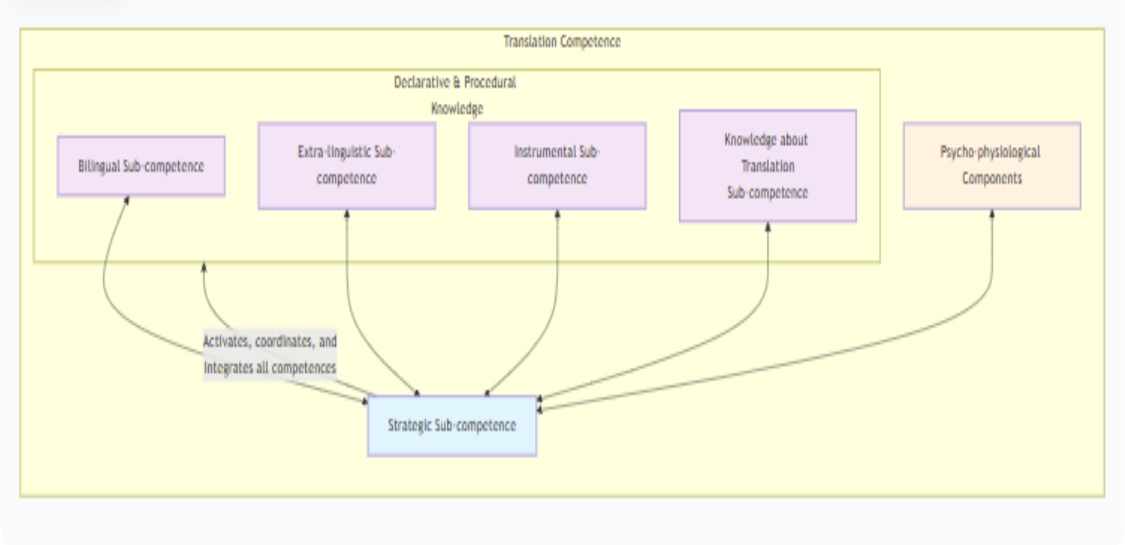
From the linguistic point of view, translation competence is seen as the combination of abilities required to complete reading, writing, and conversion tasks between different languages. Such competence is essential to generate high-caliber target texts that follow all the standards of the translation industry from a product viewpoint.

The PACTE group (Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) is a research team formed in 1997 at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. They conduct empirical-experimental research on translation competence and its acquisition in written translation, focusing on both the process and product. They are renowned for developing a widely cited, holistic model of translation competence.

The PACTE Group's 2003 model is a highly influential framework in Translation Studies, offering a comprehensive, multidimensional view of translation competence. It moves beyond the traditional idea that being a good translator simply requires proficiency in two languages. Instead, it conceptualizes translation competence as an expert system comprising several inter-related sub-competences, with strategic competence acting as the central manager that activates and coordinates all the others.

Here is the structure of the PACTE (2003) model of translation competence:

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As the diagram illustrates, the model is built around five main sub-competences and a set of psycho-physiological components, all of which are integrated by the pivotal strategic sub-competence.

2.2.1 The Five Core Sub-competences

The model is composed of five interrelated sub-competences:

- **Bilingual Sub-competence**: This comprises the procedural knowledge required to communicate in two languages. It includes pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual, grammatical, and lexical knowledge in both the source and target languages.
- **Extra-linguistic Sub-competence**: This consists primarily of declarative knowledge about the world. It encompasses bicultural knowledge (knowledge of the source and target cultures), encyclopedic knowledge (general world knowledge), and subject-specific knowledge (thematic or domain expertise).
- **Instrumental Sub-competence**: This refers to the procedural knowledge needed to use documentation sources and information technologies applied to translation. This includes dictionaries, glossaries, parallel texts, search engines, and now, corpus tools and translation memory software.
- **Knowledge about Translation Sub-competence**: This involves declarative knowledge about the principles of translation. It includes knowledge of how translation functions, knowledge of professional translation practices (workflows, client relations), and knowledge related to translation markets and professional associations.
- **Strategic Sub-competence**: This is the most critical sub-competence in the model. It is the procedural knowledge that guarantees the efficiency of the translation process and solves problems encountered. As the central component, it **plans** the process, **evaluates** the process and partial results, **activates** the other sub-competences, and **identifies and solves** translation problems.

2.2.2 Integrating Components: The Interaction of Sub-competences

The PACTE model is defined by the dynamic interaction of its parts:

- **Strategic Sub-competence at the Core**: As shown in the diagram, strategic sub-competence sits at the center, connecting to and controlling all other sub-competences. For instance, when a

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translator encounters a cultural concept (activating the extra-linguistic sub-competence) with no direct equivalent in the target language (activating the bilingual sub-competence), the strategic sub-competence intervenes to devise a plan. It might decide to use a documentation tool (instrumental sub-competence) to research the concept, drawing on knowledge about translation norms (knowledge about translation sub-competence) to decide whether to borrow, adapt, or explain the term.

- **Psycho-physiological Components**: Surrounding and interacting with all these competences are psycho-physiological components, which include cognitive factors (memory, perception, attention), attitudinal factors (intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigor), and psychomotor mechanisms (e.g., reading and writing speed). (PACTE Group 2003).

2. Cognitive Translation process

Translation is mainly characterized by three features as seen by Amparo Hurtado (2007:40): "it's an act of communication, an operation between texts (and not language), and a mental process". In this regard, the translator should consider three important aspects: translation as an act of communication, translation as a median of communication between the ST and target text (TT) and lastly translation as a cognitive process which aims at communicating a message adequately in a different socio-cultural context. This complex process of communication requires both linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to achieve this objective (Shreve et a l 1997).

Moreover, Gerver (1971: viii) defined the interpreting task as "a fairly complex form of human information processing involving the reception, storage, transformation, and transmission of verbal information." Hence, some of the dominant research issues have included the processing capacity of the human information processing system, the possibility of dividing attention over various tasks (multi-tasking), and the structure and function of its memory component(s).

3. The concept of Linguistic Intelligence:

In his Multiple Intelligences Theory, Gardner disagreed with viewing intelligence as a single, fixed ability, and he rejected limiting its definition or measurement to traditional standardized tests. Instead, he proposed a conception that humans are better understood when they are considered to possess a number of relatively distinct mental abilities, rather than being reduced to a single level expressed by an intelligence quotient (IQ). He also explained that humans possess at least eight relatively independent patterns of mental performance, which he termed "intelligences," emphasizing that each type has its own characteristics and skills that can be observed and assessed. These kinds of intelligence he set are summarized in: logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalistic intelligence and liguistic intelligence.(Gardner, 1983).

3.1. Gardner'sMultiple Intelligences Theory

It has been a long time since Howard Gardner introduced the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, laying the foundational premises for exploring the various branches of human intelligence and attempting to link each to a specific research domain.

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As far as this paper focuses, linguistic intelligence is defined as the sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the use of language to achieve goals (Gardner, 1999). Key skills related to linguistic intelligence include: understanding word order and meaning, persuading others of a particular course of action, explaining, teaching, learning, humor, memory, recall, and more. People with high linguistic intelligence include lawyers, orators, writers, and poets.

Gardner (1983, 1999) characterizes linguistic intelligence through several abilities:

- Phonological sensitivity
- Lexical and semantic precision
- Grammatical awareness
- Pragmatic competence
- Metalinguistic reflection

These abilities correspond closely to what applied linguistics describes as communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Linguistic intelligence is not merely vocabulary knowledge but an integrated sensitivity to form, meaning, and contextual use.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, language processing involves lexical access, syntactic parsing, semantic integration, and discourse-level interpretation (Levelt, 1989). These processes are central to translation, which requires comprehension in the source language and reformulation in the target language under cognitive constraints.

4. Multiple Intelligences and Translation Performance

Experimental studies have investigated the relationship between translators' multiple intelligences and their translation performance. A study conducted at Arak University examined the multiple intelligences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Iran and their relationship to translation performance (Mirhosseini, Ahmadian, & Yazdani, 2016). The researchers compared participants' scores on the Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scale (MIDAS) with their performance on six translation tasks. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between multiple intelligences scores and translation performance, with different types of intelligence showing varying correlations (Mirhosseini et al., 2016). Notably, logical-mathematical and naturalistic intelligence showed stronger correlations with translation performance compared to other types of intelligence (Mirhosseini et al., 2016). This finding suggests that while linguistic intelligence forms the basis of translation work, successful translation performance depends on a broader range of cognitive abilities.

This aligns with observations indicating that different translation disciplines attract different types of intelligence. For example, research in consecutive interpreting has shown a strong correlation between multiple intelligences and translation performance, supporting the claim that interpreters and film dubbing artists benefit from strong interpersonal intelligence (Golshahi and Tajvedi, 2021). For instance, technical translators need high spatial and logical-mathematical intelligence, while interpreters and film dubbing artists benefit from strong kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence. Lyric translators, on the other hand, need sophisticated musical intelligence. This means that linguistic intelligence does not

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operate in isolation but rather in coordination with other cognitive abilities, and this combination depends specifically on the demands of the particular translation task.

When specifying the linguistic type of intelligence, a research work was conducted at M'sila University in 2021 by Allioui and Zorig, investigating the effective relationship between linguistic intelligence and translation mastery among EFL bachelor students. The results of the study showed clearly that there is a significant relationship between EFL learners' linguistic intelligence and translation mastery.

4. Linguistic intelligence in the context of translation:

When it is the case of translation, the concept of linguistic intelligence goes beyond simply mastering two languages. Stuart Campbell's work on second-language translation provides a fundamental framework for understanding the components of translation competence. Campbell proposes that translation competence encompasses textual competence which is the ability to produce target texts, translator competence that is the ability to manage the translation process, and transfer competence which is the ability to move between languages.

Within this framework, linguistic intelligence emerges as a core ability that enables these competencies to develop. It includes what Campbell calls "translation-grammatical competence" and "translation-vocabulary competence"—that is, the systematic knowledge and intuitive understanding of linguistic structures that allow translators to recognize patterns, make judgments about the acceptability of a text, and use language creatively. (Campbell, 1998).

4.1.Linguistic intelligence abilities and skills:

In Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983;1999), he specifies linguistic intelligence with a number of skills that should be matered by translators and interpreters to perfectly conduct the translation process with minimum of errors especially when dealing with poetry. Grounded in the framework of this theory, linguistic intelligence refers to sensitivity to language structure, meaning, sound patterns, and pragmatic use. In mediation professions such as translation and interpreting, these abilities become highly specialized and operational. According to Gardner, linguistic intelligence includes:

1. Sensitivity to phonology (sound patterns, rhythm, intonation): It means having a highly attuned "ear" for the language. It's the ability to perceive and process the physical, auditory structure of language, not just the meaning of the words, but how they sound, flow, and feel.
2. Mastery of syntax (grammatical structure): When a translator combines "mastery of grammar" with other skills, they are able to take the meaning they have understood and rebuild it from scratch in a new language, ensuring that the final product is not only accurate, but also structurally sound and natural.
3. Lexical and semantic precision: It is lexical and semantic precision that distinguishes a communicator from someone who merely substitutes words. It is the ability to go beyond the surface level of vocabulary and understand the deeper network of meaning, connotation, and context in which words exist.

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4. Pragmatic and discourse awareness: It is the skill of understanding "the space between words." It ensures that the translator not only conveys the message, but also the relationship, intention, and context.
5. Metalinguistic reflection: It is the ability to step outside of language and look at it as an object of study. It is thinking about how you are thinking about language.
6. Rhetorical and stylistic control: it is the difference between being understood and being compelling.
7. Memory for verbal material: This is about storage and retrieval. Memory is the interpreter's mental workspace and warehouse. Without it, all the other skills are useless because the words disappear before they can be translated.

The above-mentioned skills serve in different manners during the translation, some are translators to conducting a smooth translation with minimum of misleading errors.

5. Cognitive Processes in Translation: Activating Linguistic Intelligence Comprehension, Decision-Making, and Paraphrasing

Julianne House, a leading scholar in translation studies, has called for a renewed focus on the cognitive-linguistic approach in translation research (House, 2013). House emphasizes that “it is both necessary and useful to describe and explain how the strategies of comprehension, decision-making, and reformulation arise in the mind of a bilingual translator” (House, 2013, p. 46). This perspective frames translation as a series of cognitive processes, each relying on linguistic intelligence in distinct ways.

During comprehension, linguistic intelligence enables the translator to analyze the structure of the source text, resolve ambiguities, and construct mental representations of meaning. This process involves what cognitive linguists call “interpretation”—the ability to conceptualize a situation in alternative ways. Liu Chengwang and colleagues argue that “inconsistency arises from the cognitive subjectivity of the translator, leading to differences in concepts, interpretations, and modes of expression.” Therefore, the translator’s linguistic intelligence must encompass not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also an understanding of how these forms shape and constrain meaning.

The decision-making process during translation involves choosing between alternative formulations, a process dependent on the translator’s internal sense of linguistic acceptability. Research in the field of inter-Slavic language understanding has shown that speakers’ ability to perceive and interpret formal similarities between languages largely determines successful communication (Stenger, [year needed]). In translation contexts, this perceptual ability—an aspect of linguistic intelligence—enables translators to identify synonyms, literal quotations, and structural similarities that facilitate transfer.

The final stage, paraphrasing, requires the translator to produce a target language text that meets several constraints: semantic equivalence, stylistic appropriateness, and pragmatic effectiveness. This production relies on what Erton calls “sociolinguistic, communicative, strategic, pragmatic, and semiotic competencies,” all of which are derived from and extended by basic linguistic intelligence.

5.1 Integrating Intelligences in Translation Practice

Linguistic intelligence encompasses a n umber of important abilities that a successful translator should not sequentially, but rather integrates them into their work. By integrating linguistic intelligence,

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the translator can understand the *intent* behind the words and recreate that intent naturally in the target language. Unlike a machine that might process language sequentially (word-by-word), the human brain must simultaneously analyze grammar, grasp cultural context, interpret tone, and recall specialized terminology—all within milliseconds.

Linguistic intelligence manifests in translation through several interrelated dimensions. In both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, sensitivity to phonological features plays a decisive role. An acute awareness of intonation patterns, stress placement, rhythm, and subtle phonetic distinctions enables the interpreter to accurately perceive the speaker's intent and reproduce it appropriately in the target language, shaping how meaning is reformulated. (PACTE Group 2003)

First, lexical and semantic sensitivity equips the translator or interpreter to detect polysemy, connotative nuances, shifts in register, and semantic ambiguities. This awareness helps prevent overly literal renderings, misinterpretations, and errors arising from false cognates or partial equivalences.

Also, syntactic adaptability allows practitioners to reorganize sentence structures and establish grammatically sound relationships in the target language. Through restructuring and reformulation, they preserve coherence, logical progression, and textual unity despite structural differences between languages.

Pragmatic competence involves recognizing implicit meanings, speech acts, politeness conventions, and contextual cues. Such insight informs the translator's or interpreter's decisions, ensuring that the communicative intention and interpersonal dynamics of the source message are appropriately conveyed.

Eventually, metalinguistic awareness supports conscious monitoring of linguistic choices. It enables revision, self-correction, and the deliberate application of strategies during both translation and interpreting tasks, fostering greater precision and control. (PACTE Group 2003).

As previously mentioned, this integration supports the translator's competence, the specialized knowledge and skill that distinguishes professional translators from bilingual individuals without formal translation training. Developing this competence requires not only honing individual cognitive abilities but also cultivating metacognitive strategies to coordinate them.

In written translation, linguistic intelligence is the translator's essential capacity to analyze, manipulate, and recreate language in written form. It involves a deep sensitivity to the nuances of both the source and target languages, allowing for a translation that is not only correct but also contextually and stylistically appropriate.

Most, if not all, of these skills converge in the translation process across its various forms, whether written, simultaneous, or consecutive. For example, all these forms share a sensitivity to sounds, a commitment to preserving grammatical structures, pragmatism, rhetorical awareness, and mastery of rhetoric and style. We must also not forget a crucial element, particularly in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting: memory. Memory plays a vital role in preventing distortion of meaning, which is often challenged by several factors, most notably the context of the translation itself, in addition to the time constraint. Unlike the written translator, the simultaneous interpreter has limited time to employ the elements of linguistic intelligence that Gardner outlined during the translation process. Nevertheless, many interpreters successfully overcome this obstacle and achieve the goal of translation, which is the smooth transfer of information from one language to another without compromising its meaning.

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6. Conclusion:

To conclude, the relationship between linguistic intelligence and translation is intrinsically existing as linguistic intelligence constitutes the foundational cognitive capacity underlying translation performance. It encompasses not only proficiency in multiple languages but also the sophisticated ability to navigate between linguistic systems, recognize cross-linguistic patterns, manage the cognitive demands of comprehension and production, and achieve conceptual equivalence across languages. Whether be it in translation competence or performance, in both written, simultaneous or even consecutive translations, linguistic intelligence represents the pillar upon which the rendering process is built. These different modes' mechanisms are all for the good use of Gardner's linguistic intelligence related abilities.

Moreover, the versatility of inducting them within the translation operation necessitates a brilliant translator who must be meta linguistically brilliant and well aware of how to manipulate both languages; SL and TL in view to minimize the misleading errors and to render the text or the speech in case of interpretation in the perfect shape. This awareness activates a set of interconnected competencies evoked by Gardner, linguistic, strategic, communicative, and metalinguistic that may appear separate but work in perfect harmony during written and oral translation. In particular, sensitivity to phonetic features, semantic ambiguity, rhetorical patterns, and contextual reasoning enables written and oral translators to manage paraphrasing processes fluently and accurately.

The many ways linguistic intelligence expresses itself in translation include the following:

• In simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, phonological awareness is essential for accurate perception of intonation, stress, rhythm and phonetic details so as to influence the form in which the thoughts expressed in the source language are represented in the target language.

• Lexical and semantic awareness allows the translator/interpreter to identify occurrences of polysemy, connotation, registers and weaknesses in senses in order to avoid literal mistranslations and abuses of false cognates.

• Syntactic flexibility means that the translator or interpreter can re-structure sentences and create grammatical relationships between grammatical structures in the target language that maintain coherence and logical relationships.

• With respect to pragmatic awareness, knowledge of the implicit meaning of language as well as speech acts, politeness strategies and cues will influence the translator's or interpreter's decision-making in the process of translation and interpretation.

• Metalinguistic awareness allows the translator and interpreter to consciously monitor their language choices when they revise, self-correct and employ strategic decision-making when executing translation and interpretation tasks.

These aspects correspond to multidimensional models of translation competence, such as that put forth by the PACTE Group (2003), where linguistic competence interacts with the other components of strategic and communicative competence. However, the primary element that activates and coordinates each of these components is language intelligence. If the analytical and expressive nature of linguistic intelligence does not exist, then strategic competence will have no linguistic material within which to

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function. Additionally, linguistic intelligence in translation extends beyond the structural level; it encompasses the view of language as a phenomenon influenced by culture.

Effective handling of both the source and target languages depends on the translator's ability to perceive language not only as a structure, but also as a set of meanings embedded within social, cultural, and communicative contexts.

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