CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND EXPERTISE IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

Translation is a specialized discipline with its own theoretical frameworks, including Skopus Theory, Relevance Theory, and Functional Equivalence. These theories underscore the complexity of translation, which goes beyond language and linguistic proficiency. Despite this, scholars from literature and language often claim expertise in translation without formal training or experience on translation. This raises concerns about conflicts of interest and the potential for subpar translations. Expertise in literature or language does not automatically confer expertise in translation. The study finds that translation requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances, linguistic subtleties, and technical skills. The study recommends that the field of translation demands a distinct set of competencies that cannot be assumed based on related fields. The study recognized translation as a distinct discipline and one that is crucial for ensuring quality and accuracy and where excellence can be promoted leading to the avoidance of conflicts of interest. This process requires a good understanding of translation theories and practices. The study concluded that, translation expertise requires dedicated training and experience so that those who claim expertise in translation must demonstrate a thorough grasp of the field's complexities. Only then can it be ensured that translations meet the highest standards of quality and fidelity with a community of skilled translators who can navigate the intricacies of language and culture with precision.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Expertise, Conflicts of Interest, Translation Theory, Specialized Discipline, Translation Quality, Translator Training.

Introduction

Translation is often treated as a marginal skill and as merely a matter of linguistic substitution. However, such a reduction fails to account for the conceptual and disciplinary rigor that translation as a practice entails. The persistent marginalization of translation studies within academia, especially when scholars from literature and language departments assume authoritative roles in translation without formal training, raises not only epistemological but also ethical questions. This tension becomes particularly grave in multilingual academic or literary environments where accuracy, fidelity, and contextual sensitivity are non-negotiable because what is at stake is not only the quality of the translated work but also the legitimacy of translation as a professional and scholarly field.

Despite the increasing global mobility of texts and people, translation is still widely misunderstood. It is often conflated with bilingualism or seen as an intuitive activity that any competent speaker of at least two languages can undertake. This misconception is especially pronounced in academic environments where the authority to translate is often claimed by scholars trained in language or literature yet lacking foundational training in translation theory or methodology. The assumption that subject-matter expertise or linguistic fluency is sufficient for translation work is not only misplaced, but also potentially damaging. The risk here is that the integrity of the source text may be compromised; while the professional identity and disciplinary legitimacy of translators are undermined.

In institutional contexts, particularly in publishing touching on academia and cultural mediation, the stakes of translation are high. Poor translations can misrepresent authors' ideas, distort political correctness and fail to carry over subtle rhetorical or cultural elements that are essential to the meaning of the original text. Furthermore, when unqualified individuals take on translation roles, they often do so without an awareness of the theoretical frameworks and ethical responsibilities that undergird translation practice. This becomes a conflict of interest when those who wield institutional or disciplinary power assert interpretative control over texts without the necessary disciplinary tools to do so responsibly.

Translation studies has emerged as a response to precisely these tensions. As a discipline, it aims to establish rigorous methodologies, ethical standards, and evaluative frameworks to distinguish professional translation from casual or intuitive language mediation. According to Pym (2010:78), translation is "a problem-solving activity guided by purpose, audience, and context" This

definition showcases the multiplicity of competencies required of the translator not only linguistic, but also cultural, ethical, and technical. Such a perspective affirms the view that translation is a specialized form of expert practice, not a general linguistic function.

Again, the assumption that scholars from adjacent fields can seamlessly transition into translation without training is thus deeply problematic. It presumes a linear relationship between language proficiency and translational skill, bypassing the disciplinary knowledge and training necessary for responsible translation. For instance, a professor of comparative literature may have deep insights into thematic analysis, intertextuality, and genre conventions, but that does not equip him to navigate the technical and ethical demands of translation. Indeed, expertise in interpretation or textual analysis does not equate to expertise in interlingual mediation, which operates according to its own norms and constraints, a point this research attempts to argue out.

Defining Translation

Translation demands far more than fluency in at least two languages requiring a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and technical competencies. Holding translation merely as bilingual proficiency overlooks the extensive decision-making and cultural mediation integral to the practice. According to the PACTE research collective, translation competence is "the underlying system of declarative and predominantly procedural knowledge required to translate" (PACTE, 2003, p. 58). This strategic core coordinates six interrelated sub-competencies: bilingual, extra-linguistic, knowledge about translation, instrumental, strategic, and psycho-physiological. Without these, a bilingual speaker or more, even highly fluent lacks the procedural skills to deliver professional-grade translations. Empirical validation by PACTE shows that expert translators consistently outperform bilinguals and foreign-language teachers in areas like problem identification and resolution, decision-making speed, and final product acceptability. These findings dispel a common assumption that proficient bilingualism does not equate to translation competence. Instead, translation requires targeted training in managing cognitive demands and using reference tools—skills grounded in procedural knowledge, not linguistic dexterity alone.

Translation also goes beyond lexical substitution which is a form of cultural negotiation. Scholars like Snell-Hornby (1988) have emphasized that linguistic transfer must be accompanied by cultural awareness to bridge worldviews accurately. Anonymous cross-cultural translation studies further

assert that without cultural competency, translations risk becoming superficially fluent yet semantically hollow. Sonila Alla (2024), for instance, notes the translator's task in preserving both textual and cultural essence when handling idioms, humor, or historical allusions. Relying solely on literal equivalence often undermines a translation's meaningfulness for the target audience. Translators operate as expert mediators who balance the fidelity to source texts with the expectations and conventions of target audiences. Becoming a proficient translator may require a minimum of ten years of experience and this underscores the extensive commitment required beyond mere fluency to attain a level of competence recognized across disciplines.

Theories of Translation

Translation as a discipline is intellectually anchored in theories that provide frameworks for practice and assessment. These frameworks especially Skopos Theory, Relevance Theory, and Functional Equivalence are more than abstract formulations as they determine how translation mediates purpose, fidelity, and audience. This section critically engages with these theories, not as co-equal choices, but as evolving paradigms that reflect the ongoing negotiation between accuracy and function in translation.

Skopos Theory

The Skopos theory, initially advanced by Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss (1984), reoriented translation studies by examining the purpose of the target text (TT) over fidelity to the source text (ST). Its foundational claim is that, translation should be guided by its communicative aim within the receiving culture. This emphasis on purpose provides translators with the flexibility to restructure, rephrase, or omit information that would otherwise be preserved under more literalist paradigms. However, this flexibility is not license for arbitrariness because purpose must be contextually determined and norm-governed, shaped by the expectations of the target audience. A medical translator, for instance, cannot render a term merely for ease of comprehension if doing so compromises precision. Ismayilli (2024), in a study of medical translation, shows how Skopos principles are applied to balance clarity and technical accuracy, especially when translating acronyms and pharmaceutical terms. The translator's functional decisions must "safeguard intertextual coherence while maintaining semantic integrity" (p. 171). What Skopos achieves, then, is a pragmatist ethos which subordinates literal equivalence to communicative success. The theory's strength which is its attention to audience can become a liability if not tied to empirical knowledge of that audience's interpretive frameworks.

Functional Equivalence

Functional equivalence, developed within the linguistic and anthropological translation schools, calls for conveying meaning that fulfils the same role in the target context as in the source. The goal is not to reproduce exact words but to reproduce the effect. In medical translation for instance, this might mean using culturally familiar analogy to explain procedures or symptoms rather than retaining unfamiliar clinical terminology. Still, functional equivalence has its critics, particularly when it leads to simplification or cultural overcompensation. The translator's task, then, is to balance fidelity and functionality; translating, for example, "hypertension" not as "high blood pressure" if the audience includes medical professionals, but as such when addressing lay readers. Hoang (2021, p.58) illustrates this by examining Vietnamese translations of English patient information leaflets.

Using Skopos-aligned strategies, translators "restructured syntactic and terminological features to match the literacy levels of non-specialist readers while preserving medical accuracy" Critically, functional equivalence resists literalism without endorsing domestication. It demands sensitivity to cultural registers and social function, particularly in cases where direct equivalence is either unavailable or misleading. However, it also invites scrutiny such as when does functional equivalence becomes interpretive projection? That tension remains unresolved in both theory and practice.

Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory, formulated by Sperber and Wilson (1986), enters the field with a different emphasis which is cognition. It argues that communication depends on a shared assumption of optimal relevance, where the receiver makes inferential efforts based on contextual cues. Applied to translation, this means that meaning is not in the text per se, but in how the target reader processes the text. Unlike Skopos or functional equivalence, Relevance Theory doesn't begin with textual purpose or social effect. It begins with the act of interpretation so that translation under this model is a balancing act between informativeness and cognitive effort. The more effort a reader must expend, the greater the expectation that this effort will be rewarded with meaningful information.

This expectation however introduces challenges, particularly when translating idiomatic or culturally embedded expressions. In Ismayilli's (2024) analysis of medical idioms, relevance was achieved not by maintaining form but by substituting expressions that delivered similar inferential results. For instance,

English metaphors of "battling cancer" were rendered into culturally congruent phrases in Azerbaijani that preserved emotional and contextual relevance. While powerful in theory, Relevance Theory assumes a level of cognitive uniformity that rarely exists in multilingual, multicultural translation contexts. Audiences interpret based on vastly different schemata, and translators cannot always anticipate these interpretive variations. Thus, while relevance is a noble goal, it remains a variable and unstable criterion in multilingual communication.

Training in Translation

Translation demands a distinct pedagogical infrastructure that is often missing or misunderstood. Effective training in translation must go beyond linguistic accuracy to encompass strategic decision-making, cultural competence, and metacognitive awareness. While many institutions still default to grammar-translation or teacher-centered models, the changing nature of global communication necessitates a re-evaluation of what constitutes translator readiness. This section argues that translation training must deliberately cultivate cognitive, procedural, and reflective capacities through informed and purposeful methods and not incidental exposure.

Translation is frequently reduced to a linguistic exercise in early instructional settings, where accuracy at the lexical or syntactic level is preferred over interpretive coherence. Such instruction fails to prepare students for real-world tasks, which require decisions about context, audience, and purpose. The traditional classroom model which is anchored in exercises detached from communicative objectives rarely confronts learners with the kinds of ambiguities, omissions, and culturally embedded meaning that define professional translation. Strategic competence emerges when translators can assess constraints, anticipate mis-readings, and justify their choices and not simply reproduce equivalent expressions. These capacities cannot be imparted through repetition but must be developed through situated practice. Translation students should not merely memorize terminologies but learn when to explain, omit, or adapt terms based on functional relevance. This necessity is especially salient in specialized fields like legal or medical translation, where uninformed literalism could result in dangerous miscommunication.

Without structured guidance on how to apply and reflect on their choices, novice translators may equate fluency with adequacy. Such assumptions are not only flawed but professionally hazardous. An effective training model should, therefore, integrate knowledge acquisition with critical reflection,

offering students regular opportunities to navigate uncertainty and evaluate competing strategies. Recent models of translator education have turned toward task-based instruction (TBI) as a response to traditional shortcomings. Dorri and Parham (2025:72) examined the impact of TBI on undergraduate translation students handling culturally embedded materials. Using structured activities grounded in social constructivist theory, they observed marked improvements in procedural knowledge and planning. One key finding was that "planning skills increased by 52.17 percentage points," illustrating how guided task sequencing facilitated the internalization of decision-making strategies

Rather than merely executing translations, students engaged in collaborative problem-solving, research, and peer evaluation thus approximating the real-life workflows of translators. This approach fostered not only cognitive skill development but also heightened metacognitive regulation. Students learned to monitor their understanding, assess the quality of information sources, and revise their output based on instructor and peer feedback. These are not tangential skills but essential components of translation expertise. The significance here is that task-based models create immersive environments where theory and practice converge. Also, they epitomise self-awareness such that students must not only know what to do but also why they do it. This way, mistakes are not signs of failure but data for recalibration, pushing students toward reflective autonomy.

Translation competence is not one-sided but consists of multiple domains such as linguistic, cultural, technical, strategic and ethical. The PACTE model which is one of the most influential frameworks in translator training articulates this multifaceted nature, identifying sub-competencies such as bilingual proficiency, knowledge of translation procedures, instrumental resources (like CAT tools), and psychophysiological traits like perseverance and stress management (PACTE Group, 2003). While the PACTE model has been refined over time, its core insight remains vital which is that competence is developmental, not inherent. The challenge is not only to teach vocabulary or grammar but to simulate the interdependent pressures that real translators face. For example, learners might be asked to translate a news article under time constraints while adapting the tone for different readerships. This kind of task builds integrative competence far more effectively than isolated sentence drills.

However, simply referencing "competence" without a supporting infrastructure such as qualified mentors, structured feedback, and access to

digital tools undermines the pedagogical intent. In many developing contexts, such as Iran, the curricular content is misaligned with contemporary demands. Dorri and Parham (2025) observed that Iranian programs still rely heavily on teacher-centered delivery, marginalizing the very autonomy that translation students need to cultivate. This disconnect reinforces the illusion that translation is a derivative skill rather than a professional discipline in its own right. A recurring issue in translator training is the lack of alignment between institutional expectations and professional realities. Students may be graded on surface-level fluency, with little regard for whether their translations meet client expectations or cultural appropriateness.

One of the most underutilized resources in translator training is metacognition which is the ability to think about one's own thinking. While metacognition is well-documented in fields like STEM education and psychology, its explicit integration into translator education remains inconsistent. Dorri and Parham's (2025, p.73) study makes a compelling case for embedding metacognitive training within translation curricula. Students engaged in tasks that required them to plan research strategies, monitor comprehension, and evaluate cultural appropriateness. This approach led to substantial gains across eight subcomponents of metacognition, particularly in "planning" and "debugging" strategies (Such growth was not the result of incidental exposure but the outcome of intentional activities that modeled expert reasoning.

The Concept of Expertise

The distinction between knowledge and expertise is essential in translation studies. Expertise is not simply advanced knowledge of two or more languages but the disciplined, evidence-based, and reflexive application of translation principles under context-specific constraints. While some assume that fluency in more than one language qualifies an individual as a translation expert, this belief fails under scrutiny. Expertise in translation is founded on competence domains such as strategic decision-making, ethical responsibility, process management, and specialized disciplinary knowledge components often absent in adjacent fields like literary studies or general linguistics.

Translation expertise emerges from the sustained application of informed practices in high-stakes, often uncertain contexts. Translators must operate with precision, especially when confronting ambiguity, cultural variance, and terminological instability. These are not incidental challenges but defining features of professional translation. Unlike language proficiency, which entails the ability to read, write, and speak a language fluently, translation demands the capacity to intervene across languages while shaping text in

ways that fulfil a communicative goal without distorting meaning or violating the norms of the target context. For instance, a bilingual speaker may understand a metaphor, but a trained translator must evaluate its translatability, consider target-culture equivalents, and decide whether to retain or replace it based on genre, audience, and medium.

Thus, expertise consists in managing a matrix of constraints rather than merely transferring text. This is captured in He's (2025:10) analysis of post-AI translation roles, where translators are reconceptualized not as "linguistic transmitters" but as "interdisciplinary agents" responsible for quality control, adaptation, and contextual mediation Such role expansion demands not only deep cultural knowledge but also critical judgment and technological literacy skills cultivated over time, and not presumed. Many scholars in literature and language departments incorrectly believe that their interpretive training makes them naturally suited to translation. This conflation undermines the professionalization of translation. While literary critics may analyze texts with sensitivity to form and meaning, they are not trained to make decisions under pressure of purpose, audience, and localization.

Untrained "experts" may produce translations that are aesthetically pleasing yet pragmatically flawed, failing to meet the needs of publishers, readers, or stakeholders. The assumption that literary sophistication equates to translation competence encourages ethical lapses, including unjustified claims of authority and bypassing of professional translators. The tenacity of this misconception reflects a broader issue which is the lack of consensus on what counts as translational expertise. While regulatory bodies and professional associations have tried to fill this gap through certification schemes, the academic sphere remains a site of ambiguity and contested boundaries. Competence in translation comprises multiple dimensions, each grounded in practice and theory such as Linguistic and cultural proficiency, Instrumental competence, Strategic competence, Interpersonal competence, and Ethical competence.

The confusion between translation and general language expertise is often due to the overlapping tools both employ such as dictionaries, grammar rules, syntax awareness. However, the similarities end there. Language scholars are trained to describe and analyze language structures, while translators must use language performatively to produce texts that serve a defined function in a target setting. This deviation becomes critical in domains such as medical translation. A language expert may understand clinical terminology, but a translation expert will recognize when cultural mediation is needed when

literal rendering may result in misdiagnosis, and how to communicate probabilistic language to lay readers.

Critically, the demarcation between the two is not about superiority but about appropriateness. It is not that language scholars lack intelligence or care, but that they lack the training to make translation-specific judgments. He (2025, p.7) emphasizes that, the evolution of translation roles under AI pressures has only deepened this divide, requiring translators to function simultaneously as evaluators, researchers, and cross-cultural mediators Expertise in translation is not merely a credential or title but a dynamic process of lifelong learning, recalibration, and ethical self-monitoring. It is forged through repeated exposure to diverse texts, rigorous feedback, reflective practice, and engagement with translation theory. This dynamic view also implies that even experienced translators are not universally competent. A translator specializing in legal contracts may not be suited for subtitling films. Competence is always domain-bound and requires constant updating. The emergence of AI-assisted environments only underscores this need: which is that translators must now understand not just texts, but algorithms, workflows, and data privacy frameworks.

The translator's role is not merely to convert but to mediate. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled by those whose only claim is fluency or textual familiarity. As machine translation grows in competence and scope, the human translator's value will lie increasingly in what machines cannot do such as to interpret cultural cues, make ethical decisions, adapt stylistic nuance, and ensure situational appropriateness. Hence, translation expertise is not a static achievement but a cultivated, reflexive practice embedded in professional, ethical, and social accountability.

Conflicts of Interest in the Field of Translation

One of the most persistent tensions arises when scholars from adjacent fields particularly literature and linguistics assert authority over translation despite lacking the theoretical grounding or professional training specific to the field. These boundary crossings, while sometimes benevolent in interdisciplinary contexts, frequently blur the lines of accountability and compromise quality, leading to epistemic and ethical complications in both scholarship and practice. The belief that mastery in literary criticism or linguistics equates to translational expertise is not uncommon. This phenomenon is often rooted in the mistaken assumption that bilingualism or text analysis automatically qualifies one to translate. In reality, translation is not just an intellectual

exercise but a profession governed by methodologies, norms, and performance standards.

Koskinen and Dam (2016, p.234) critically examine how academics engage in "boundary work" to both define and defend the legitimacy of translation as a profession. They note that "researchers and practitioners may have different views and conflicting interests" especially when outsiders attempt to frame translation without engaging its operational realities. This misalignment leads to distortions in curriculum design, hiring practices, and even peer review, where language scholars may undervalue or misrepresent translation-specific research and processes. The problem intensifies when translation is treated as a mere technique rather than a knowledge-based, ethically regulated practice. Such mischaracterizations can relegate translation to a secondary skillset, diminishing its complexity and undermining efforts toward its professionalization. When scholars position themselves as translation authorities without relevant training or practice, their work can mislead students, twist funding priorities, and dilute disciplinary standards.

The intrusion of language and literature academics into translation has not only operational consequences but identity implications. Professional translators often find their roles redefined or diminished in spaces dominated by outsiders. This misappropriation is compounded by institutional prestige: such that a professor of English or any other language literature may carry more influence than a practitioner with years of experience and training in translation. This dynamic foster epistemic injustice, where the experiential knowledge of translators is subordinated to theoretical abstraction. Translators are then seen as facilitators rather than knowledge producers, further marginalizing their professional identity. Koskinen and Dam (2016:261) aptly characterize this as a "conflict between external academic authority and internal professional autonomy" where outsiders impose definitions and values not grounded in practice. Finally, the profession must maintain transparent certification mechanisms. Professional bodies should enforce standards that distinguish translators from those who simply "know another language." This is not to exclude, but to protect both the integrity of the field and the quality of its outputs.

Expertise in Translation and Expectations

Translators operate under a complex web of expectations that emerge from clients, institutions, and the professional community. These expectations are often shaped by ethical codes, market forces, and the legacy of academic norms. It is assumed that translators not only possess linguistic dexterity but

also uphold rigorous professional and ethical standards. This section considers how expertise in translation is defined, measured, and judged in practice, and it evaluates the gap between theoretical principles and real-world expectations. One of the most persistent misconceptions in translation practice is the belief that fluency in two or more languages suffices for professional competence. In reality, ethical and procedural expectations far exceed this baseline. Translators are increasingly expected to demonstrate accountability, impartiality, cultural sensitivity, and transparency not only in how they render texts but also in how they represent themselves and manage client relationships.

Bennett (2021, p.32) argues that these expectations are encoded in the ethical codes of major translation associations, which position translators as "accountable agents," not merely conduits of language The translator is not expected to remain invisible but to act responsibly and transparently within a social and professional framework. This repositions translation as a performative act of trust where fidelity is not merely textual but ethical and relational. However, expectations can also be contradictory. The ideal translator, as imagined in many codes of conduct, does not always align with the practical demands of specific assignments. This creates cognitive dissonance, particularly for emerging translators trying to reconcile training with practice. The distinction between competence and accountability is central to understanding expertise in translation. Competence refers to the translator's ability to render a message accurately and idiomatically. Accountability, however, relates to how the translator justifies their choices and upholds the ethical norms of the profession.

Translation and Scholarship

Translation is no longer merely a mechanism for linguistic substitution but a scholarly act, a methodological tool that produces, preserves, and disseminates knowledge across epistemic boundaries. Its role within academic discourse is not confined to textual conversion but extends to intellectual mediation, where the translator is a knowledge producer, not just a service provider. In the context of scholarship, translation becomes an interpretive activity with theoretical consequences, requiring critical judgment, historical awareness, and ethical sensitivity. Modern scholarship increasingly acknowledges translation as a legitimate research method. Rather than being secondary to original research, translation can itself be research, especially when it involves previously untranslated or culturally sensitive material.

This has become particularly evident in the translation of historical manuscripts, such as Sanskrit texts, into contemporary academic languages. Sanjana Rajan (2025) shows how the act of translating ancient Indian manuscripts is not simply preservation but an engagement with epistemologies that have long been marginalized in Eurocentric academia. In this view, the translator operates at the intersection of knowledge systems decoding the past while reformulating it for contemporary relevance. This act is scholarly not only because it demands rigorous methodology but also because it generates insight, enabling comparative and interdisciplinary inquiry. Despite the intellectual rigour required of translators, their contribution has often been rendered invisible in scholarly systems that privilege authorship over mediation. However, translators are not neutral intermediaries but epistemic agents who shape the meaning, accessibility, and reception of texts.

Rajan (2025) underscores that translation allows for dialogue "with another culture, another time, another society" (p. 1). This reclaims the translator's role as a cultural and historical interlocutor. When a translator selects an interpretive frame, chooses terminology, or negotiates ideological tension within a text, they are engaging in acts of critical scholarship. They decide how knowledge is framed, understood, and circulated as core tasks in any academic discipline. More critically, such work disrupts the center-periphery model that has historically defined knowledge production in Western academia. Translators from the Global South, especially those working with vernacular and sacred texts, are not mere reproducers of knowledge but co-constructors of it.

Translation is integral to the broader project of decolonizing scholarship. By recovering and recontextualizing neglected or suppressed knowledge traditions, translation makes visible voices that have been excluded from dominant narratives. This is not simply a matter of language access, but of epistemic justice. Rajan (2025) points to India's vast repository of untranslated manuscripts which are over 10 million, two-thirds in Sanskrit that remain beyond the reach of both local and global scholars. The act of translating such texts becomes a scholarly intervention that counters the colonial legacy of intellectual marginalization. Furthermore, this process challenges the hegemony of English as the language of scholarly legitimacy.

Rather than waiting for validation from Euro-American institutions, communities can reclaim authority over their own knowledge systems by engaging in scholarly translation. In this sense, translation is not an act of

dependency but of autonomy. As translation is increasingly accepted as scholarship, new models of collaboration are emerging. These include partnerships between subject experts and translators, co-authored publications, and dual-commentary editions of translated texts. Such collaborations are essential to maintaining fidelity without sacrificing interpretive richness. However, there is often institutional resistance to treating translation as an academic output equal to original research. Journal metrics, citation norms, and tenure evaluation criteria still tend to privilege solo-authored works and publications in dominant languages. This systemic bias discourages translators from pursuing publication routes that foreground their scholarly contribution.

Evaluation

Evaluating translations, especially in specialized fields like medical, legal domains, engineering, etc. involves more than error detection or fluency metrics as it requires a principled understanding of communicative intent, target audience expectations, and professional standards. Quality in translation cannot be reduced to literal equivalence. Effective evaluation frameworks must account for function, register, genre norms, and pragmatic coherence. This is particularly true for domain-specific texts where inaccuracies may have serious implications. In clinical trials for example, errors in translating informed consent documents could violate ethical guidelines or legal standards.

Traditional models of evaluation often focused on the linguistic reliability paradigm were errors are marked for deviations in grammar, spelling, or semantics. However, this reductionist approach neglects critical contextual features. The Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) model, now widely adopted in both academia and industry presents a more sophisticated approach as it integrates dimensions such as accuracy, fluency, style, locale conventions, and verity of terminology, providing a medium for holistic evaluation. The MQM framework acknowledges that not all errors carry equal weight. A mistranslation of a medical dosage is more severe than a stylistic inconsistency. Thus, quality assessment must be factored with attention to the potential impact of errors on users.

Evaluating translation competence requires a method that reflects the skills needed in authentic professional settings. In the context of human-in-the-loop workflows such as those used at Unbabel competence is not measured merely by fluency but by subject-matter expertise, decision-making, and revision capabilities. Diana Silveira's (2024, p.3) study, conducted at Unbabel, is illustrative of this direction. Silveira designed a model for assessing subject-

matter expertise (SME) in medical translation using GPT-4 to generate multiple-choice questions (MCQs). Rather than evaluate translation output directly, her approach pre-assesses the translator's ability to operate in the medical domain, aiming to align revision tasks with appropriately skilled personnel. This model reflects a shift toward pre-emptive competence evaluation matching tasks with translator profiles rather than retroactively correcting errors

This competence-based strategy enhances accuracy and efficiency. It recognizes that qualified translators not only produce better translations but also require less supervision and revision. Furthermore, it underscores that expertise is not generic but must be demonstrably aligned with the subject matter. One of the challenges in translation evaluation is achieving consistency and fairness across assessors and contexts. Machine Translation (MT) and AI-generated content have significantly complicated the evaluation landscape. Human reviewers not only assess the quality of translation but also the quality of the assessment instruments. This meta-evaluation ensures that testing procedures evolve with linguistic and domain-specific changes, increasing reliability over time.

Evaluation should not be reduced to a single score or output. A robust system will include: Linguistic and Functional Review – Does the translation achieve its purpose in the target context? Expertise Assessment–Does the translator have the requisite subject-matter knowledge? Process Review – What strategies were used, and how were decisions justified? Peer Validation–Are translations reviewed and agreed upon by domain experts? Ethical and Confidentiality Compliance – Were legal and ethical standards upheld? When properly implemented, these supports not only quality assurance but also translator development and accountability. Translators are not only evaluated; they are also made aware of the expectations and standards they are to uphold.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The cumulative evidence gathered across this study makes it clear that translation is not merely an adjunct of language proficiency or literary sensibility, but a discrete and demanding profession with a rigorous body of knowledge, specific technical practices, and significant social responsibilities. Recognizing this distinctiveness requires not only theoretical acknowledgment but also concrete reforms in training, accreditation, and policy frameworks. Despite growing recognition, translation still suffers from policy neglect in many institutions and public sectors. Carmen Valero-Garcés (2019, p.90)

notes that "language issues are often not recognised as an integral part of migratory movements or social integration"

A decisive shift is needed in government and institutional policies where language access must be embedded within national integration strategies, healthcare protocols, legal proceedings, and education systems. Translators should be recognized as essential actors in public service, alongside doctors, educators, and legal professionals. Funding mechanisms must support standardized translator deployment in multilingual contexts. If translation is to fulfil its societal role with integrity, a multi-layered professional infrastructure must be established. Three concrete steps are needed:

1. Institutional Accreditation – Like medicine or law, translation training institutions should be held to unified international standards. National boards can recognize institutions based on core criteria such as trainer qualifications, curricular rigor, practicum hours, and graduate tracking.

2. Licensing and Regulation – Translators should be certified through nationally or regionally governed exams tailored to domain-specific competencies (e.g., medical, legal, technical). This will ensure that only those with validated expertise operate in sensitive areas.

3. Clear Role Delineation – The boundaries between bilingual helpers, amateur translators, and certified professionals must be codified in public documentation. This delineation protects translators from exploitation and protects users from miscommunication.

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