Article

CADERNOS de TRADUÇÃO

Performance-based instruction and assessment in translation pedagogy

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Abstract: The quest for an optimum method has for some time now landed translation pedagogy in social constructivism and task-based instruction. For all the agreement that exists on the need to make changes and adapt task-based instruction to translation teaching, there are still theoretical limitations, practical implementation barriers, and contextual mismatches between the tenets of task-based instruction and translation training needs, and research on the procedural details of a translation lesson or the dynamics of a task-based translation classroom remains sporadic, if scarce. In this article, we have drawn on the extant literature on translation competence, translation teaching best practices, a limited-scale study on an earlier version, expert feedback, and our own experience as translation trainers to develop an instructional cycle that may potentially address the foregoing shortcomings. We have proposed a tailor-made performance-based instruction and assessment task cycle that could complement the current proposed task-based instruction designs for translation teaching. We have then borrowed from the concept of the post-method era in language teaching and concluded that the search for a single best method of translation teaching ought to give way to an alternative approach that develops trainees' translation competence within their unique translation ecology.

Keywords: translator training; task-based instruction; social constructivism; translation competence.

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Cadernos de Tradução, 45, 2025, e102764
Graduate Program in Translation Studies
Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. ISSN 2175-7968
DOI https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-7968.2025.e102764

1. Introduction

While translation, as encompassing interpreting, is an ancient activity, the business of teaching it as training for prospective professionals, i.e., translation pedagogy, is barely a century old and systematic research on translator and interpreter training, beginning with the turn of the century, is even more nascent (Hurtado Albir, 2019). Despite its relatively young age, translation didactics has seen a sea change. In one major shift of paradigm, translation teaching took cue from emerging approaches to education and foreign language pedagogy and started to move away from teacher-directed transmissionist approaches towards more learner centricity (Kim, 2012). Meanwhile, Social Constructivism was a pathbreaker in translation pedagogy to boot. In a social constructivist framework, translation trainees are no longer mere recipients of translation directives but rather agents of translatorial action. The most recent trends in translator education ipso facto display a marked shift towards the development of translat*or* competences. The educational shift towards meaningful models of competence-based, student-centred learning coupled with the integration of technology and assessment reform, promoted by the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, run alongside recent trends in translator training (Presas, 2012). It is along these lines that translation classrooms are becoming more trainee-centred, professionally informed, and socially interactive as the instructor facilitates the learning process rather than prescribing it.

Although Li's (2024) review of 1171 articles spanning 68 years of research in interpreter and translator education reveals that instruction and/or effect is the number one researched theme in translator and interpreter education research (Li, 2024), much, especially experimental, is still needed in the translation and interpreting studies research of this type as both translation/interpreting training and assessment are still developing (Abdel Latif, 2018). These findings still corroborate with González Davies' assertion as far back as 2004 in that despite a wealth of research on the process and product of translation, fairly little has been written on classroom dynamics (González Davies, 2004). The foregoing proposition is particularly relevant in the context of Iran where, despite recent developments in translator training, the "read and translate" directive is still prevalent (see, for example, Farahzad et al., 2011; Zare & Sadighi, 2022). A traditional read-and-translate classroom may be described as a not-so-flexible, teacher-led approach where students are given excerpts of texts to translate—often as homework, focusing more than anything on linguistic accuracy. It is often the teacher, the ultimate arbiter, that provides the texts and has the final say when giving feedback to ensure correctness. In addition to the classroom dynamics, academic translator training has also been criticised, inter alia, for the inadequacy of its subjective and anecdotal curriculum (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2019) which has made it unapt for the real-world translation market but also for its outworn unilateral teacher-to-student approach to translator training (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2011; Kafi et al., 2018; Ghaemi & Sadoughvanini, 2020; Hajmalek & Aghamohammadi, 2023; Samir & Motallebzadeh, 2023).

An alternative to the classic teacher-centred, read-and-translate translation classroom can well be the task-based instruction (TBI) approach. Initially—and now prevalently—used in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), TBI has also proved effective when adapted to translation didactics. For example, in their bibliometric study, Zhou and Wu (2023) concluded that if designed carefully, TBI can contribute to training more versatile translators and although TBI is

not without its challenges, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. To date, multiple studies across different contexts have shown the effectiveness of task-based translation teaching (TBTT) in developing translation (sub-)competence(s) (Li, 2013; Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Silva & Fernandes, 2016; Zheng, 2019; Alenezi, 2020; Ghaemi & Sadoughvanini, 2020; Zhou & Wu, 2023; Matalu, 2024). Still, unlike what is customary in TESOL, little has been written on the exact procedure that TBTT should follow, i.e., the stages, steps, interaction patterns, feedback, mode of assessment, etc.

The persistent schism between extant traditional approaches to translator training and the shifting demands of the translation profession have been a constant critical challenge for educators. Methodologies rooted in a read-and-translate mode of instruction, while arguably foundational, are often insufficient for developing the holistic, situated, and complex competencies that define contemporary translation practice. It is this gap between outdated pedagogy and dynamic professional requirements that prompted the central inquiry of this paper. More specifically, our work was guided by the following questions:

1) What are the essential components of an integrated pedagogical cycle that effectively combines social constructivism, task-based learning, and performance-based assessment?
2) How can such a cycle be structured to not only remedy the shortcomings of traditional instruction but also proactively address the evolving needs of translation education vis-à-vis the market?

The present article provides an account of our attempt in developing a social constructivist, task-based translation teaching cycle incorporated into performance-based instruction and assessment. Our proposed cycle is expected to not only address the foregoing inadequacies but also see to the requirements and emerging desiderata of the 21st century translation education and market.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Paradigm shifts in translation pedagogy

In her seminal book *Multiple Voices in the Translation Classroom*, González Davies (2004) draws on four concepts to propose alternative designs and process-oriented translation tasks that are distanced from the traditional transmissionist approaches to translation pedagogy, namely humanistic education, communicative approach, co-operative learning, and social constructivism. While these pedagogical paradigms are interlocked and the borders where they meet are blurry, they all revolve around the concept of idiosyncratic learning through collaboration, i.e., learners actively construct meaning by bringing in their own experiences, cognitive styles, and sociocultural backgrounds to the learning process and acquire knowledge, activate inert schema, and develop skills by way of social interaction. While humanistic teaching "views the student as a subject who can contribute actively to transforming the group's as well as his or her own competence and performance, not as an object that receives the teacher's transmitted knowledge" (González Davies, 2004, p. 12), the communicative approach argues that "learners learn a language through the process of communicating in it, and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better

opportunity for learning" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 95), and co-operative learning, essentially based on Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, is defined as engaging in teamwork towards the accomplishment of shared goals, thus enhancing learning and achieving outcomes that benefit all group members (Johnson & Johnson, 2018).

Another important propeller of paradigm shifts in translation pedagogy has been the chasm between theory and practice. Chesterman and Wagner (2014, p. 1), for example, say that few professions might have as yawning a gap between theory and practice as translation. The same gap can be said to exist between the competences acquired by trainee translators in their training programmes and the level and range of competences required by the actual translation marketplace worldwide (Pym, 2003; Krajcso, 2018; Ayuso et al., 2022; Stepanova & Troitsky, 2023) and in Iran (Mollanazar & Kamyab, 2015; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2019; Kazemi Jovein et al., 2024). These concerns emanate chiefly from the processes and outcomes of learning opportunities provided by institutions. In this context, Kiraly (2000) defines the concept of translator competence as encompassing a holistic view of translating where learners develop their competences to work autonomously and yet collaboratively. Elsewhere, Kiraly states that epistemology and class activities should undergo a radical shift of approach: a shift from *exercises* to *pieces of work* designed to recreate real-life experiences that entail "a myriad of real-world factors including time pressure, professional responsibility, and self-assessment that would add real-world dimensions to otherwise lifeless exercises" (Kiraly, 2006b, p. 1103). But then he takes a step further, and by drawing on complexity theory, tries to show that transmissionist, transactional, and transformational teaching approaches combined may produce better results than any single one approach (Kiraly, 2006a).

The shift of perspective on translator training has oft fallen in with the so-called 21st Century Skills, i.e., a set of skills and abilities identified as necessary for success in professional and social spheres. Ever since the term came to prevail in the 1980s, different institutions have each proposed their own skillset and competences. Despite their overwhelming diversity, almost all concur on communication and collaboration, not to mention information and communications technology, not only as part of in-class tuition, but as stand-alone skills (see, inter alia, ISTE Standards, OECD Competency Framework, Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), and World Economic Forum's 21st Century Skills). These developments square with the principles of social constructivism. A number of recent researches have also addressed the importance of incorporating 21st Century Skills into translator education programmes (Sumiati et al., 2020; Tran, 2023) and although not directly referenced to, they are also enshrined in the European Master's in Translation Competence Framework (EC Directorate-General for Translation, 2022). As the field of translation evolves with advancements in AI and globalisation, there is a growing need to incorporate into the translation syllabi the teaching of skillsets thought to be crucial for future translators (Bernardini et al., 2020).

2.1.1 Social constructivism

The social constructivist theory of learning broached by Lev Vygotsky is premised on the assumption that social interaction is the cornerstone of the construction of knowledge and that knowledge is co-constructed in an environment of interaction (Kiraly, 2015). This educational philosophy has led to the development of teaching strategies that aim to create meaningful and

context-rich learning experiences for translation students and which have influenced pedagogical approaches that promote authentic, situated, collaborative, and scaffolded learning.

2.1.2 Authentic learning

Authentic learning refers to instructional methods that use real-world problems and tasks to engage students in meaningful and practical activities. In the context of translation pedagogy, authentic instruction can be construed as exposing trainees to actual translation tasks that a professional would most likely encounter. According to Kiraly (2000), authentic learning tasks help students develop the practical skills needed for professional translation by providing opportunities to work on genuine texts. More optimally, pedagogical procedures may embed situated learning practices which "aim at facilitating the transition from (near-)authentic task- and/or project-based work to real-life professional practice" (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016, p. 3). Viewing it from the perspective of employability and work placement, Hirci (2023, p. 902), too, supports the use of authentic learning which "can be achieved through collaborative learning in simulated practices involving real-life activities, tasks and projects […] while using authentic materials where professional settings are embedded in translator training".

Authentic learning also involves problem-solving. Chesterman (2016) views providing novice translators with explicit teaching and learning problem-solving skills as an essential toolkit, which enables them to depart from conscious processing off to automatised processing. Folaron (2006) claims that since translators are to deal with a variety of text genres and target readerships, they ought to develop a problem-solving competence, which has been recognised as strategic competence in translation competence models such as PACTE (2003) (see 2.2).

2.1.3 Situated learning

Situated learning posits that learning occurs most effectively within its context. In translator training, situated learning involves immersing students in environments that closely resemble the settings in which they will work as professionals. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that knowledge is best acquired through participation in social practices. For translation students, this means engaging in activities that mimic the professional translation environment, such as internships or simulated translation projects. González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído (2016, p. 1) suggest that situated learning is a context-dependent approach to translator and interpreter training which exposes the learners "to real-life and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom" and which seeks to ultimately "enhance learners' capacity to think and act like professionals".

According to Pym (2011), the rationale of including fundamental motivation in translator education and training arises from the necessity to provide situated learning experiences that are highly associated with market demands. Likewise, Kiraly (2000) claims that it is of importance that all stakeholders be involved in professional translating practice so that they can reap from the experience of real communication with clients through their jobs. Others like Mackenzie (2004) take even a step further and believe that trainee translators should engage in a role-play exercise, assuming different roles in a translating job, for example, the roles of a client or a proof-reader,

from the time the job is offered until the time they are paid. To underscore the significance of integrating interpersonal facet of authentic learning, Kelly (2014) argues that a novice translator need get the necessary information like the translation brief through developing searching and confirming skills.

Authentic learning is an off-shoot of a situated learning model (Herrington et al., 2014) and hence it would be normal for the two approaches to have a lot of common ground, including their emphasis on real-world tasks and professionally-informed environments. While both approaches aim to fill the gap between classroom learning and professional requirements, they also have subtle differences. Authentic learning emphasises the real-world relevance of tasks and development of skills that can be transferred to solve the problems in the context of future use (Herrington et al., 2014). Situated learning, endorsed in social constructivist approaches, suggests that learning is an authentic activity bound by the physical, social, and cultural context of the learning experience (Kumar, 2021). That is why "optimal pedagogical procedures in Situated Learning aim at facilitating the transition from (near-)authentic task- and/or project-based work to real-life professional practice" (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016).

2.1.4 Collaborative learning

Collaboration has become an integral part of education insofar as it represents a C in the 4C's of the 21st Century Skills (i.e., Critical thinking; Creativity; *Collaboration*; and Communication). Collaborative learning is an educational approach where students work together to solve problems, complete tasks, or create products. Social constructivism highlights the importance of social interaction in learning, making collaborative learning a key component of any learning activity.

As early as 2003—and even before that—Kiraly (see, for example, Kiraly, 2003) advocated for project-based learning in translation education, where students collaborate on translation projects, share resources, and provide peer feedback. This collaborative approach not only enhances learning outcomes but also mirrors the collaborative nature of professional translation work, where translators often work in teams and rely on feedback from colleagues and clients.

According to Kiraly (2000), interaction with peers endows novices with ample opportunity to set up new knowledge. Bruffee (1993), whose views on Collaborative Learning have influenced Kiraly, proposes that the novice be involved in the professional community and know about the interactional requirements in the given context, which is only possible by adding a collaborative aspect to learning.

2.1.5 Scaffolded learning

Scaffolded learning involves providing students with temporary support structures to help them achieve higher levels of understanding and skill acquisition. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underpins scaffolded learning, emphasising the role of more knowledgeable others in facilitating student learning.

According to Vygotsky (1980), learning most efficaciously occurs in the ZPD and the teacher's scaffolding. ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem

solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1980, p. 86). This scaffolded guidance is a mental support structure provided by the teacher that can be gradually dismantled as learners become more independent, assume more learning responsibility, and become more autonomous. This underscores the role of teachers, translator trainers in our context, as facilitator and moderator in transformationist approaches to translation teaching, as opposed to their role in the formerly transmissionist approaches.

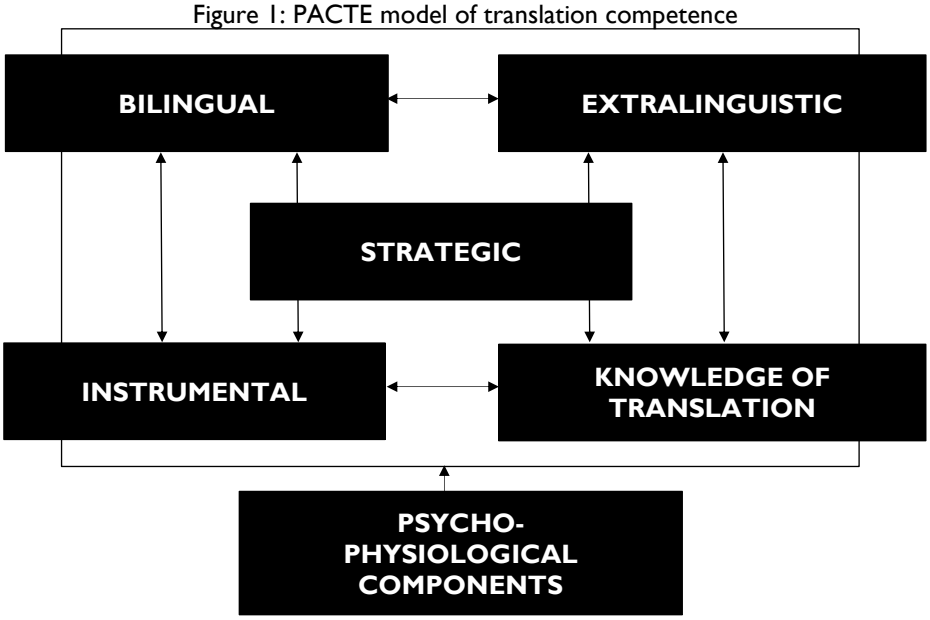
In translator training, scaffolding can take the form of guidance from instructors, feedback during the translation process, or the use of translation technologies and resources. Kiraly (2015) discusses how scaffolding techniques, such as modelling translation processes and providing step-by-step feedback, help students progressively develop their translation competencies.

2.2 Translation competence

Due to the complex and integrative nature of the construct of translation competence (TC), it is difficult to give at hand a precise and unanimously agreed upon definition. PACTE (2003) defines TC as the underlying system of expert knowledge needed to translate in which the procedural aspect is predominant. Another recent professional definition is given by Taebi and Mousavi Razavi (2020, p. 313): "The proven ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities and talents, in line of work or study and in professional and personal development at any given moment in time described in terms of autonomy and responsibility".

Notwithstanding the discrepancies in the definition of the term TC, there is a general consensus that TC is a macro-competence which has a set of smaller constituent components normally referred to as sub-competences (SC). Thus far, a number of TC models with more or less similar SCs have been developed (e.g., PACTE, 2003; Göpferich, 2008; EMT Expert Group, 2009). One frequently referenced TC model, which we have used for the purpose of this article, is proposed by PACTE (2003) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: PACTE model of translation competence



Source: PACTE (2003, p. 60)

The rationale for choosing the PACTE model is that it provides a robust and empirically tested foundation for an integrated performance-based instruction and assessment cycle of translation teaching within the social constructivist approach—one that is holistic and flexible and which lends itself well to competence-based TBI while recognising measurable SCs that can be used for assessment purposes. PACTE (2005) have identified five interrelated sub-competences and a psycho-physiological component as constituents of their model of translation competence. These include:

- bilingual sub-competence, inclusive of pragmatic, (socio-)linguistic, textual and lexico-grammatical knowledge in working languages;
- extra-linguistic sub-competence, inclusive of encyclopaedic, thematic and intercultural knowledge;
- instrumental sub-competence, pertaining to the use of resources and information technologies in the act of translation;
- translation knowledge sub-competence, the predominantly declarative knowledge of how principles, processes, methods and procedures inform the act and profession of translation;
- strategic sub-competence, the controller sub-competence, inclusive of conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal planning, quality control and problem-solving abilities and compensatory strategies that may be required during translation; and
- psycho-physiological components, including cognitive (e.g., memory, attention, etc.) and attitudinal (perseverance, critical thinking, rigour, motivation, etc.) components, abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis, and psychomotor mechanisms.

As Taebi and Mousavi Razavi (2020, p. 320) put it, "translation sub-competences are interrelated but do not necessarily develop in parallel or sequence. […] What is more, each sub-competence is like a cog in the wheel of a sophisticated system and thus cannot be singled out for special treatment". Regardless of the TC model teachers subscribe to, therefore, they need to ensure that their lessons and instructional practices systematically and progressively, but not necessarily simultaneously, target the SCs and their development over time as tasks increase in complexity over the course of instruction/curriculum to integrate multiple SCs gradually.

2.3 Task-based instruction

Task-based instruction (TBI) and task-based learning are used to primarily refer to an approach to language education that focuses on how students can successfully mobilise all their resources to complete an authentic "task" using the vehicle of language as a means to an end (Ellis, 2003). This means that, more often than not, there is not a single correct answer to a task but a number of viable pathways to successful completion of a task and its objectives. TBI, therefore, is premised upon both social constructivism and reflective learning. During a TBI lesson, learners grow attentive to their loopholes and lapses of knowledge, are pushed to their limits, made cognisant of their needs and weaknesses, and hence work together towards higher autonomy.

The first application of TBI in translator education, according to Kelly and Martin (2019), dates to the work of Hurtado Albir (1999) and later González Davies (2004). To date, several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TBI in translator training (Askari Bigdeli & Rezvani, 2013; Li, 2013; Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Zeng & Lu-Chen, 2002) and less frequently in interpreter education (e.g., Shafiei et al., 2019).

In the context of language education, Nunan (2004) argues that TBI offers advantages compared to more traditional approaches to language education. It is learner-driven and allows learners to use all their resources and to experiment with the language in an atmosphere that has been acknowledged as being more motivating and enjoyable for learners. However, the implementation of TBI is not without challenges and drawbacks. These include allocating time for remedial instruction and effective feedback, ensuring adequacy of input, but also full professional competence of the instructor in the subject matter as well as teaching and classroom/lesson management skills. When engaged in tasks, learners barely get enough input from the teacher or other sources. TBI does not figure strongly in the mainstream educational system, either, since courses that are designed as per principles of TBI are at best task-*supported* (Ellis, 2003). Afterall, it is close to impossible to replicate an actual communicative (or professional, in the case of translation) ecology given the limitations of instruction and tools but also the learners' awareness that their experience can go nowhere beyond, ideally, an augmented simulation of a prospective environment/job.

The foregoing squares with the context of translator training, too. In their survey study in the Iranian context, Hajmalek and Aghamohammadi (2023) concluded that the advantage of task-based translation teaching (TBTT) was its collaborative and student-centred nature whereas the main disadvantage was its being time-consuming and challenging for teachers to design and implement. This is a conclusion that tallies with other studies on the role of TBTT (see, inter alia, Li, 2013; Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Zheng, 2019; Zhou & Wu, 2023).

2.3.1 Typology and characteristics of tasks

Thus far, several taxonomies have been proposed for tasks according to their purpose, cognitive processes involved, content, and complexity, among others. In the context of TESOL, one way to classify tasks is to broadly categorise them in two classes of *authentic* and *simulated* (or pedagogical) (Nunan, 2004). González Davies (2004) states that translation classes may benefit from both pedagogical and real-world tasks. Inoue and Candlin (2015), too, believe that tasks should integrate not only pedagogical but also as many prospective professional requirements as possible into the learning environment.

Regardless of the typology considered, the most common characteristics of a *task* can be summarised as below:

A. Tasks are goal-oriented and holistic in nature (Ellis, 2018). Holistic learning recognises the interconnectedness of all dimensions of learning and skills development, including cognitive, affective, social and environmental aspects (Johnson, 2023).
B. Tasks are interconnected. Willis and Willis (2007) talk of the significant value a task cycle has in pedagogy (i.e., pre-task, task, planning, and reporting stages as one cycle).

C. Tasks are authentic and have a real-life connection to learner's experiences or professional contexts. Experiential learning, a crucial aspect of TBI, engages learners in every single stage of their learning (Nunan, 2004). An element of "professional ecology", therefore, ought to be present. In the case of translator education, these may include marketing, quality assurance, deadline, etc.
D. Tasks are learner-centred and often involve an information gap that need be bridged through interaction (Van den Branden, 2006). Hence, tasks promote a shift in teacher and learner roles where learners are proactive and take the pivotal roles while the teacher facilitates the learning process (Willis & Willis, 2007).
E. Tasks are engaging and authentic in nature. According to Ellis (2003), carrying out simulated real-life tasks helps learners sharpen their critical thinking skills.
F. Tasks pose an appropriate level of challenge. Tasks should push learners slightly beyond their levels of competence and into their ZPD, where they are cognitively engaged and can perform with assistance through interaction with peers or the instructor (Ellis, 2017).

A review of the literature on translation didactics suggests that there is great consensus over the characteristics and features of an effective translation task. In their survey study, Hajmalek and Aghamohammadi (2023) extracted the components of effective TBTT and summarised them in Table 1.

Table 1: The components and subcomponents of task-based translation teaching

Component	Sub-components
Authenticity & Contextualization	Problem-orientedness Authentic tasks Authentic texts
Balanced Focus on Meaning & Form	Focus on meaning Focus on forma Focus on context
Process-orientedness	Scaffolding Maximum student engagement Priority of process over product Focus on cognitive processes and strategies Integrative approach to tasks Embracing errors Task cycle implementation
Interactivity	Pair/group work Communication Problem-solving and Decision-making tasks
Learner-centeredness	Student talking time Students' contribution
Reflectivity & Evaluation	Self and peer evaluation Reflective measures Providing constant feedback Task report

Source: Hajmalek and Aghamohammadi (2023, p. 117)

2.3.2 Task cycle

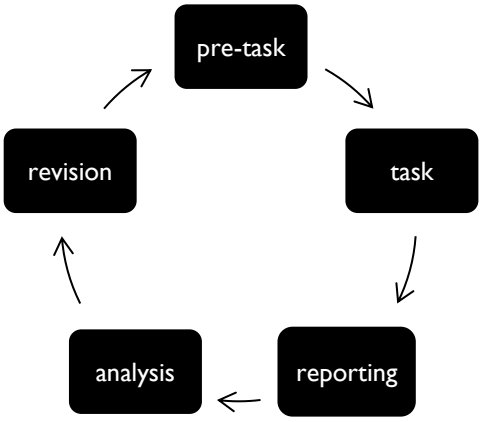
TBL is inherently cyclical (Nunan, 2004), emphasising the iterative process of continuous, incremental competence-building through repeated cycles of problem-solving, practice, and feedback-informed refinement (Hunt & Smith, 2019). In the field of TESOL, the contribution of the cyclical nature of TBI is further strengthened by "task repetition", a valuable pedagogical tool that involves repeating the same or form- and/or content-altered tasks at intervals of time (Bygate, 2018).

Generally, there are three phases of a task: a pre-task, a task cycle and a post-task. According to Nunan (2004), the pre-task prepares learners by activating their background knowledge and top-down processing, where they use prior understanding to make sense of new information. He notes that it is functionally similar to schema-building tasks in broader instructional plans, helping learners focus on the activity, sparking their interest, and allowing practice of key language needed to complete the task.

For Willis (1996), the task cycle itself is broken down into three stages of task, planning and report. Once students have completed the task at hand in pairs or groups (task), they prepare (planning) to report back to the class and receive comments and feedback (report). Willis (1996) states that in this stage, students should not only report their work to the teacher and whole class but also analyse one another's work. In the third phase, the teacher focuses on the learning aims and may have a detailed analysis of some of the specific areas (Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007). Once the analysis stage is over, the teacher provides targeted practice on key areas in the practice stage and the entire task cycle may be repeated as many times as necessary until a relative level of independence and attainment is ensured (Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007).

While the tenets of TBI remain epistemologically valid for translation teaching, TBI must undergo adaptations and changes before it can be used in translation pedagogy (González Davies, 2004). In this context, Li (2013) builds on the three-phase, six-stage model of TBI proposed by Willis (1996) and then proposes a task cycle made up of six adapted stages, removing the "planning" stage and replacing the "practice" stage with "revision" and "reflection" (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cycle of task-based translation teaching proposed by Li (2013)



Source: Li (2013, p. 8)

Our review of the literature on TBTT suggests that while it is gaining traction with most studies promising positive outcomes (see 1), there continues to be a dearth of longitudinal, empirical research on the different aspects of TBTT across diverse contexts. In addition, most TBI approaches to translation teaching still fall short of addressing some of the most pertinent challenges of translator training. To begin with, despite the consensus over the need to *adapt* TBI to match the requirements of translator education (see, inter alia, Rezvani & Askari Bigdeli, 2012; Li, 2013; Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Silva & Fernandes, 2016; Zheng, 2019; Hajmalek & Aghamohammadi, 2023; Zhou & Wu, 2023), there seems to be little agreement on a model that can determine what exactly needs to change and how.

With the exception of González Davies (2004) and Li (2013), studies on TBTT are not adequately elaborate on the concrete phases and stages of the task and how a lesson needs to progress in- and out-of-class, although many have clearly defined the roles of the teacher and the learners throughout. In addition, TBTT models are designed mainly to work on the product and/or process within the transfer function of the translation proper. This means that adapting them to extend their focus beyond linguistic and transfer competences onto, say, instrumental competence, translator's habitus formation, professional workflows, professionalism, and the role of assessment *as* and *for* learning seem to have been forsaken (exceptions being González Davies, 2004; Hurtado Albir, 2007; Li, 2013). These shortcomings pose serious challenges for translator training, accreditation, and material development and hence sanction the integration of tasks into a broader mould of performance-based instruction and assessment.

2.4 Performance-based instruction and assessment

In an educational context, performance means the successful application of the acquired knowledge, skills, and work habits in order to solve real-world problems (Tabrizi & House, 2025). Performance tasks, therefore, follow a "use-and-do" approach to knowledge and skills development and are therefore mindful of both the process and product of learning. Performance tasks may involve more than one acceptable solution and require the learner to justify theirs. As such, performance tasks are not only integral to learning but provide an opportunity for authentic assessment (assessment *as*, *for*, and *of* learning). This is very much in line with Vygotsky's (2012) multiple realities. In addition, the notions of multiplicity and unfixed context highlight the importance of learners' active role in the process of meaning-making, co-creation of knowledge, and ultimately, learning.

The relatively recent literature on the application of performance-based instruction in other realms attests to its validity, meaningfulness, authenticity, and equitability and confirms that it is in fact apt to meeting the demands of the century (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Goldberg & Roswell, 2000; Miller & Linn, 2000; Fastré et al., 2010). This conclusion dovetails with Fastré et al. (2010) where they investigated the effect of performance-based versus competence-based assessment on task performance and self-assessment. In another study, Kim (2005) investigated the effect of implementing performance assessment on student learning and concluded that performance assessment improved student learning on average. According to Howsam (1972), in performance-based instruction what students learn is based on the acquisition of *skills*. This may well be what translation pedagogy needs.

Performance-based assessment is empowered to better reflect good instructional activities that are better reflections of the criterion performances which are authentic and thus of import outside the classroom. Darling-Hammond (1994, p. 5) argues for policies that provide "top-down support for bottom-up reform", with the role of assessment as provider of opportunities for "a recursive process of self-reflection, self-critique, self-correction, and self-renewal". Performance-based assessment can be used for both summative and formative assessment. As Kelly (2014, p. 133) argues, "[t]he two functions are not mutually exclusive in that even final examinations used for summative assessment may have a formative role if marked and returned to students with comments (written or oral) on how to improve". Performance assessment also provides teachers and educational institutions with practical information on how students are progressing in their studies and gives them a more usable and down-to-earth form of monitoring and giving feedback.

Performance-based assessment is done according to a rubric of assessment criteria (see Taebi et al., 2025, for a sample). This rubric is a critical checklist and translation quality assessment instrument which is used to provide learners with the scaffolded structure needed to work independently or in groups/pairs and to quality-check their own or peers' work. A performance task assessment rubric is devised *after* a task has been designed since the items on the rubric need to address the essential content, process skills, and work habits incorporated in the task. The rubrics can be tailored to the specific content of a particular task. The translation quality assessment rubric ought to have statements that address the quality of both the process and the product of the translated text and require the trainees to assess their learning outcomes by writing "can-do" statements about their achievements and "need-to" statements about what they are yet to learn and practise towards the co-ordinated and balanced build-up of all their translation sub-competences.

3. Development and rationale of the cycle

In order to answer the question of whether a TBI-integrated performance-based instruction and assessment (PBIA) cycle of translation teaching can contribute to the trainees' quality of translation and the way they perceive translation courses in comparison to more traditional ways of instruction prevalent in Iran, a preliminary cycle of TBTT was adapted based on the TBI model by Willis (1996). The cycle was then piloted in a 2-hour translation workshop, modifications were made accordingly, and the final cycle was put to empirical and qualitative testing in 2017 as part of the first author's MA thesis, supervised and advised, respectively, by the second and third author (see Taebi, 2017, for details).

The results of our empirical testing, the student perception of teaching questionnaire, and the feedback we received from translation teachers convinced us that while the initial cycle showed potential, it still needed adjustment and further development. Later, we reviewed the more recent literature (see 2) and identified the mix of pedagogical approaches and good instructional qualities and teaching practices that the literature supported as being conducive to the acquisition of TC/SCs. Table 2 summarises our finding.

Table 2 corroborated, to a large extent, the survey finding by Hajmalek and Aghamohammadi (2023) where they listed the effective characteristics of translation teaching tasks (see Table 1). We then referred to our own experiences as translation trainers, drew from the components that we

had learnt to be relevant in our context, and incorporated them into the cycle. The interplay of these components within a social constructivist landscape and in the mould of TBI ultimately led to the development of a modified cycle of PBIA translation instruction (Figure 3).

Table 2: Summary of good instructional approaches found to contribute to development of SCs/TC

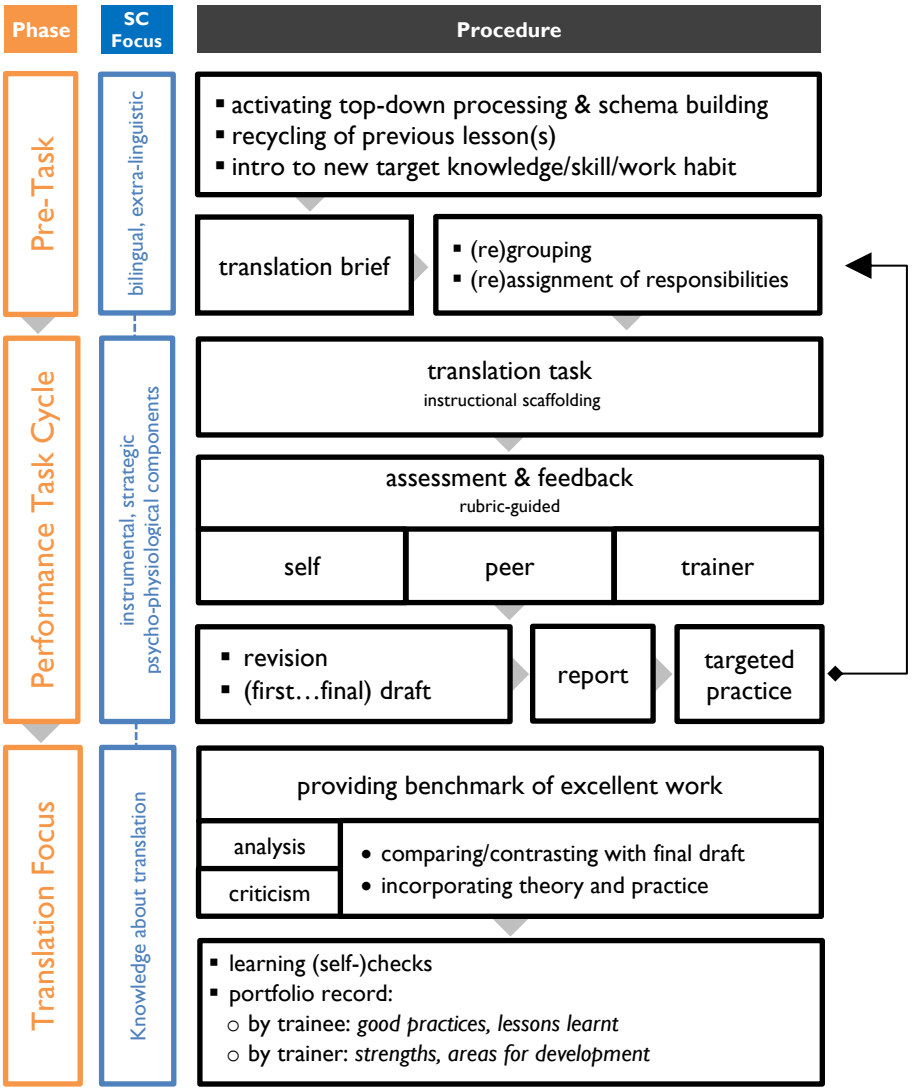
Approach	Principle/Description	Applications	Competences
Social Constructivist	Knowledge co-constructed collaboratively; instructor as facilitator	Group projects, Peer review, Negotiation of meaning	Strategic, Interpersonal
Task-Based & Situated	Learning via authentic, holistic tasks mirroring professional practice	Simulation projects, role assignments, Problem-based learning	Holistic (esp. Instrumental, Strategic, Extra-Linguistic)
Process-Oriented & Reflective	Focus on the cognitive/procedural "how" of translating, not just the product	TAPs, self-checks, Draft or "better" version comparison	Strategic, Psycho-physiological, Knowledge of translation
Functionalist	Purpose (skopos) as the primary guide for translation decisions	Authentic briefs, Justification of choices	Extra-Linguistic, Strategic
Competence-Based	Structured framework for systematic development of professional (sub-) competence(s)	Modular/focused lessons, Competence-based rubrics	Holistic
Technology Integrated	Integration of professional tools to meet market demands	CAT/TMS labs, collab revision components, DTP-ready delivery of final product	Instrumental, Professional
Performance-Based	Alternative/formative assessment, authentic tasks, portfolio records, reflection for improvement	Portfolio of work, Client feedback simulations, Self/peer assessment	Holistic

Source: Authors (2025)

4. Description and application of the proposed cycle

PBIA follows a logical progression from concrete, less demanding tasks to more abstract and cognitively challenging ones. Since it is important for a learner to structure and organise their acquisition over time and locate their competence in the network of the required macro- and micro-competences, schema-building and recycling of prior knowledge and skills precede the task itself. An important consideration in task design is what Krashen (1985) has termed as the input hypothesis. The input hypothesis warrants the use of recycling in the pre-task. According to the hypothesis, the learner understands the input (i) that is slightly above their level of competence (i+1). In translation, therefore, *t* is what should be recycled in the pre-task and *t+1* becomes the basis for the translation task in the performance task cycle. In the pre-task, therefore, the trainer might highlight the problematic areas and review and introduce subject-specific lexis, for instance. They also help the trainees understand the translation brief and prepare. Depending on the level of instruction and task aim(s), the brief may contain not only information about the text, intended audience (i.e., skopos), deadline, etc., but also instructions on how to carry out each phase of the translation task (e.g., research, ad hoc knowledge acquisition, sources to be consulted, etc.) or the details on the process, that is, where to begin and how to approach the text. Alternatively, more autonomous trainees may be given a free hand at looking for parallel texts or obtaining world-knowledge about the topic.

Figure 3: Proposed Performance-Based Instruction and Assessment (PBIA) cycle of translation instruction



Source: Authors (2025)

An important consideration in task design is the selection of texts to be translated. This, too, is dependent upon a number of factors. Although situated learning using authentic, unmanipulated texts are preferred, it might not always be feasible or desired to go for untouched excerpts. For example, if the aim is for the less competent trainees to work around a certain problematic area in the translation process, say modulation, the trainer will have to use focused tasks and may accordingly have to slightly manipulate the text to not only have a readability level that matches the competence of the learners so that text difficulty should not confound aim achievement, but also include more than one problem in the source text. Such small alterations promote functionality plus loyalty (Nord, 2005) and will not devalue the process, rather pushing it towards the other end of the spectrum where (near-)authentic learning (as opposed to situated learning) happens.

Once trainees have been briefed, grouped and assumed responsibilities, which can be either negotiated among the trainers at higher levels of autonomy or still be assigned by the trainer in earlier stages of learning, they engage in the translation task, i.e., the very act of translation or translation proper. The trainer then offers scaffolded support to learners but only in their ZPD.

Scaffolding is by nature a differentiated act and hence the type and level of scaffolding depends on an array of variables, including the level of trainee competence, the learner profile, and the type and aims of the lesson, to name a few. While scaffolding may be correcting the linguistic features of a sentence, it may be the pre-teaching of, say, specialised political terminology for another class, or it might translate into explicit client-level comments on the final product submitted by a trainee, or still, it can mean walking a group of leaners through the process. In most cases, the trainer monitors unobtrusively, providing scaffolding where and when necessary and/or asked for. If a certain inefficacious behaviour or problem prevails, the trainer should make a note of it and reserve delayed feedback for either the targeted practice section, where several focused mechanical exercises of target knowledge/skill/work habit are provided, or the translation focus phase, where conscious awareness-raising takes place. The performance task cycle is repeated with similar tasks until learners achieve a relative level of problem-solving autonomy.

In the translation focus phase, the trainer and the trainees use higher order cognitive skills to analyse and discuss the specific features of their own, their fellows' and a model translation (published, the trainer's version, or any "better" version that has some pedagogical value). Here, the role of textual analysis and criticism is particularly important insofar as many have advised this be done as part of translation activities and tasks (e.g., González Davies, 2004). Criticism here is taken to mean the comparison of a source text against its translation with analytical commentaries on the strengths, weaknesses and limitations, all within a theoretical framework (Reiss, 2014). In exploring the pathways they took, comparing them with others, the trainer and trainees engage in socialised, group commentary on each other's translation solutions, which is a reflective and dialectic discussion that paves the ground for translation theories to enter their discussions. The culmination of PBIA translation instruction is the creation of a record of lessons learnt and areas for development in a portfolio of work which may serve a host of purposes, including, but not limited to, summative assessment and remedial instruction.

Portfolios can complement the iterative and authentic nature of PBIA. A typical portfolio comprises a curated collection of a trainee's translation tasks, which could range from initial drafts to revised versions to reflective commentaries on challenges and solutions. Assessment, therefore, becomes a holistic, performance-based evaluation of the trainee's progress, self-awareness, and acquisition of translation (sub-)competence(s), as evidenced by not just the final product but by the degree of progress they have made, their level of analytical reasoning, and their ability to solve problems. While the structure of a portfolio is not exactly in the scope of this paper, we would like to refer the readers to the recommendations that exist as to the possible structure of a portfolio and the items that ought to be included (see, for example, Kelly, 2014, p. 139).

A complete lesson plan and example materials that may be used for a single lesson on translation of journalistic/political texts with a focus on Framing and Skopos theories may be found in the supplementary materials to this article (see Taebi et al., 2025).

5. Considerations, limitations, and future research

As was mentioned in section 4, the present proposed PBIA cycle of translation teaching is an outgrowth of a cycle developed by Taebi (2017). Although the quantitative results of the experimental study carried out by Taebi (2017) to validate the cycle showed no *statistically* significant

improvement in the translation quality of the group treated with the early version of PBIA, they indeed showed good signs of improvement. This statistically insignificant result may be attributed to the limitations, and more than anything, to very short longitudinality (i.e., 3 treatment sessions), since TC is "constructed" *over time*. Qualitatively, the cycle was more promising. The result of the post-pilot survey on a sample of 17 students recorded a 94 per cent overall satisfaction (Taebi, 2017).

In addition to that, Taebi (2017) reported that the majority (74.5%) of the trainees in the experimental group agreed that a collaborative environment was more conducive to the acquisition of TC. Nevertheless, this relatively high rate of satisfaction could well be attributed to the "exotic" nature of the approach compared to the traditional classroom dynamics they were used to. In this context, care must also be taken to account for the opposite, that is, "student resistance" as a threatening factor to the application of newer approaches to translator education (Parvaresh et al., 2019).

There are a number of considerations when applying the PBIA cycle of translation instruction:

- PBIA is grounded in social constructivism and premised on TBI and hence tenders their instructional merits and at the same time incorporate the skills of the 21st century in teaching. And while we have subscribed to PACTE (2003) model of translation competence, the cycle may well lend itself and be adapted to other TC models.
- PBIA can be used to teach both procedural and declarative knowledge. The task in a PBIA lesson may be one or any combination of knowledge, skills, work habits and content. As such, the task may focus on the instruction of, say, political lexis, grammar or even punctuation, shifts in translation, censorship norms, application of a certain CAT tool, the Skopos theory and even such seemingly peripheral skills as marketing and pricing.
- PBIA uses a stakeholder type of assessment in instruction both "as" and "for" but also "of" learning. It also uses alternative (portfolio) assessment which can be used as an instrument for summative evaluation as well as for continuing professional development purposes inclusive of peer and reverse mentoring at later stages (see Taebi & Mousavi Razavi, 2020). Moreover, the rationale for the use of translation criticism is to give at hand a tool for translation quality assessment which shall help not only to learn translation but also *about* it.
- PBIA may be used with both focused tasks (i.e., aiming specific translation micro skills or sub-competences) and unfocused tasks (i.e., predisposing learners to use their TC at large). In applying PBIA, there is also leeway for differentiated learning in mixed-ability classes.
- The PBIA cycle of translation instruction is Skopos-friendly and promotes peer-to-peer learning. It can be used in-class, for team translations, and as part of online collaborative (e.g. Google Docs, Moodle) or hybrid tuition. In addition, PBIA lends itself to project-based learning that could stretch over a single or a number of lessons or still end up with an authentic trainee-sourced project.

The PBIA cycle of translation instruction must also be viewed in light of a number of caveats:

- Designing and implementing TBI, and therefore PBIA, lessons is demanding on the teacher and time consuming for material development. This warrants the development of graded ready-made content for PBIA translation courses. One such attempt in the context of Iran is by Parham and Nemati Lafmejani (2020).
- It is advisable—even imperative—to simulate as near a real-world experience for trainees as practicable. In the event partnership with language or translation service providers and publishers should not be an option, it is recommended that trainees' final drafts be exhibited by way of a locally produced journal, website, etc.
- For PBIA to be effective, it need fall into systematic and consistent use. This means, among others, that a late revision (e.g., one month post task) and regular portfolio reviews (e.g., every few lessons) should be necessary to not only measure progress but also adjust the trajectory of TC acquisition and plan for the next course of action ahead.

Although based on an earlier version, the revised cycle of PBIA proposed in this paper has evolved to include a number of extra steps and components. Hence, it is suggested that future research should focus on applying the cycle in diverse educational contexts to assess its practicality, reliability, and effectiveness in developing translation competence. Such inquiry should potentially and ideally include Translation teaching (mind the capital), as inclusive of all modes and genres, including but not limited to written and audiovisual translation as well as interpreting. Since it is widely acknowledged that TBI is especially demanding on the teacher and challenging in terms of task design (e.g., Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Hajmalek & Aghamohammadi, 2023; Zhou & Wu, 2023), we suggest that further research be done on students' and teachers' perception, teacher training, and PBIA materials development and course and curriculum design.

6. Conclusion

The use of TBI, an effective approach in TESOL, has also found its way into translation pedagogy with good success (González Davies, 2004; Danan, 2010; Rezvani & Askari Bigdeli, 2012; Askari Bigdeli & Rezvani, 2013; Li, 2013; Inoue & Candlin, 2015; Shafiei et al., 2019; Ghaemi & Sadoughvanini, 2020). While there is a consensus that TBI must undergo a process of adaptation to translation pedagogy, so far attempts to develop a comprehensive and ready-to-implement procedural model of task-based translation teaching that can be used both in-class and for project-based learning and which meets the demands of the translation market remain scarce and rather inconclusive (cf. Moreno & Pujols, 2011; Li, 2013).

Incorporating TBI into PBIA and supplementing them with best instructional practices and experiences can provide a solid yet flexible foundation for the teaching of translation and development of translation competence in prospective translators. The PBIA cycle of translation instruction proposed in this article is an attempt to serve that purpose, although it is yet to be put to rigorous empirical testing.

The PBIA cycle proposed in this paper should not be considered a model or even a method of instruction. Rather it is another approach to translation didactics that is pivoted on social constructivism, TBI, and the integration of best practices and the 21st Century Skills. After all, looking for a set method for an exercise as elusive as translation might prove futile. This might be a call for a "post-method era" in studies on translation pedagogy—a departure from "the best method of" towards "an apt approach to" translator education given the situation, a move TESOL took long before (see Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

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Editorial notes

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Research dataset

Not applicable.

Funding
Not applicable.

Image copyright
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Approval by ethics committee
Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest
Not applicable.

Data availability statement
The data from this research, which are not included in this work, may be made available by the author upon request.

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Section editors

Style editors

Article history
Received: 26-11-2024
Approved: 19-07-2025
Revised: 29-08-2025
Published: 10-2025