



DUOLINGO AND TRANSLATION COMPETENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION TASKS¹

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RESUMO: A presente pesquisa se insere na interface entre o uso de recursos tecnológicos no uso de inglês como língua adicional e o campo da relação entre aprendizagem de línguas e os Estudos da Tradução. O uso de aplicativos para aprendizagem de línguas tem crescido significativamente, incorporando abordagens metodológicas modernas. Segundo Ferreira e Costa (2023), a pandemia de Covid-19 acelerou a adoção desses recursos tecnológicos, destacando-se pela utilização de estratégias como *gamificação* e recursos audiovisuais. O objetivo do estudo é descrever e analisar as tarefas de aprendizagem de inglês que envolvem tradução no Duolingo, um popular aplicativo de ensino de línguas. A relevância da pesquisa está em compreender como o Duolingo, voltado principalmente para o desenvolvimento da competência linguística, também integra tarefas de tradução ao longo das seções de aprendizagem. A metodologia adotada é de natureza descritiva/explicativa e orientada por uma abordagem qualitativa. Como base teórica, a pesquisa utiliza os conceitos de Competência Tradutória proposto por Hurtado-Albir (2020), bem como em MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) proposto por Mark Pegrum (2014) e em gamificação por Luis Fardo (2013). Os resultados indicam que, embora o foco principal do Duolingo seja o desenvolvimento de competências linguísticas, algumas tarefas nas seções do aplicativo envolvem tradução, remetendo ao método de Gramática-Tradução. A pesquisa sugere que o Duolingo pode contribuir para o desenvolvimento de habilidades básicas de tradução, principalmente no que se refere a vocabulário e gramática. Contudo, a precisão das tarefas diminui quando o usuário é desafiado por frases mais complexas ou com nuances contextuais.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem do inglês. Competência Tradutória. Duolingo. Estudos da Tradução

ABSTRACT: This research is situated at the intersection of two fields: the use of technological resources in learning English as an additional language and the field of the relationship between

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language learning and Translation Studies. The use of applications for language learning has expanded considerably, incorporating contemporary methodological approaches. According to Ferreira and Costa (2023), the advent of the CoV-19 pandemic has precipitated the adoption of technological resources in English teaching. This phenomenon is evident in the widespread implementation of strategies such as gamification and audiovisual tools. The objective of this study is to compile, describe, and analyze English learning tasks that incorporate translation elements within the Duolingo language learning application, a widely utilized platform. This research is justified by the importance of understanding how this app, which aims to develop linguistic competence, also incorporates translation tasks throughout its learning sections. The methodology employed is based on descriptive and explanatory research, adopting a qualitative approach. As a theoretical foundation, the study draws on the concept of Translation Competence proposed by Hurtado-Albir (2020), as well as Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as defined by Mark Pegrum (2014) and gamification, as discussed by Luis Fardo (2013). The research findings indicate that, although Duolingo primary objective is to develop language skills, some tasks within the app sections involve translation, reflecting elements of the Grammar-Translation methodology. The study suggests that Duolingo may also contribute to the development of basic translation skills, particularly in terms of vocabulary and grammar. However, task accuracy tends to decline when users encounter more complex sentences or contextual nuances.

Keywords: English Learning. Translation Competence. Duolingo. Translation Studies.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English has become an increasingly essential skill in today world, globalization and digital connectivity position the language as a bridge between cultures, markets, and individuals across the globe. Beyond being a mere communication tool, English has evolved into a competitive advantage, enabling access to information, educational and professional opportunities, enriching cultural experiences, and broadening personal horizons. However, the learning process is not always straightforward, and traditional teaching methods are often perceived as unappealing or inadequate to meet the demands and expectations of learners seeking greater flexibility and interactivity. In this context, the use of MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning), including mobile platforms and apps, has become a popular

strategy for language learning and teaching, enabling learning to occur anytime and anywhere. Among the most popular MALL tools is Duolingo, an app that incorporates gamification, that is, the use of game elements such as points, levels, rewards, and challenges within learning contexts to enhance user engagement in a dynamic and continuous manner.

In Duolingo, these strategies are evident in the systems of daily goals and competitive leagues, which encourage users to return to the app and continue practicing, making learning more accessible and motivating, particularly for new audiences prefer more interactive and informal approaches to language learning. However, language mastery goes beyond vocabulary and grammar. It also involves a deeper application of the language, such as in translation contexts, which necessitate the development of translation competence. This competence encompasses linguistic, cultural, and strategic skills, which are essential for learners not only to understand the language but also to translate it appropriately in different contexts.

In the autonomous and gamified learning environment provided by the Duolingo tool, whose primary aim is to develop linguistic competence, fostering translation competence can present challenges, as the translation tasks included in the app go beyond merely substituting words between languages; they require interpretative and analytical skills. Therefore, while Duolingo offers innovation and practicality in language teaching, particularly for English, it is essential to carefully examine the limitations and potential of working on more complex skills, such as translation, within the digital environment. The integration of MALL and gamification proves effective for teaching vocabulary and grammar, but to train a translator, even a beginner, the translation tasks on the platform would need to be more complex.

In this context, the object of study of this research is Duolingo, an application available for Windows, iOS, and Android, which offers a free language-learning proposal. The scope of this study is limited to its iOS version, specifically for teaching English as a Foreign Language. The objective, therefore, is to analyze whether and how Translation Competence is embedded in the translation tasks within the Duolingo app. Thus, this study is organized into the following sections: An Introduction, followed by the literature review, which presents a brief overview of the Grammar-Translation Method, as well as the development of Communicative Competence and Translation Competence. The subsequent section offers a concise description of the Duolingo application as a tool for language teaching and learning. The methodological section outlines the procedures adopted for obtaining the data necessary to conduct this research. This is followed by the analysis and discussion of the collected data, and, finally, the study concludes with the final considerations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the development of humanity, learning new languages has always played a crucial role in the interaction between different cultures and civilizations. Since the earliest contacts between peoples, communication between speakers of different languages has become an essential tool for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. According to Cestaro (2010, p. 1) “Whatever the diplomatic, social, commercial or military reasons, the need to come into contact with speakers of another language is very old.” This statement underscores the fact that learning new languages is a skill vital for progress and cooperation between civilizations, transcending both eras and motivations.

Learning a new language is a process that involves much more than simply acquiring words and expressions. In order to communicate effectively and fluently, it is essential to understand the rules that govern the structure of the language. In this context, grammar plays a crucial role, acting as the foundation on which language is organized and interpreted. It not only defines the correct ways to construct sentences but also ensures that communication is clear, precise, and comprehensible, enabling the learner to adapt to various situations and interlocutors—an essential aspect of developing linguistic competence. Grammar is regarded as a set of rules that dictates how words or parts of words, should be combined or modified to form acceptable and meaningful expressions within a language (Penny, 2000). By outlining how words and their components are combined and transformed, grammar not only guarantees clarity and cohesion in language use but also serves as a vital tool for the accurate transmission of meanings. Without these rules, communication would become unpredictable, with the risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Therefore, this foundation of standardization and intelligibility between speakers enables language to fulfill its primary function: to connect individuals and transmit knowledge efficiently.

Regarding language teaching methods, Santos (2010) states that the Grammar-Translation method was widely used in the 19th century, emphasizing the correctness and moral value of the sentences used as examples, in addition to placing strong emphasis on the structural teaching of the English language. This method played a significant role in grammar instruction and emerged in Europe for the teaching of modern languages such as French and English. By integrating grammar with translation practice, it provides a more structured understanding of the language and based on the techniques used to teach ancient languages, such as Latin and Greek. Its theoretical foundation is cognitive in nature, aimed at understanding and applying

the fundamental rules of the target language. It is a synthetic-deductive method, in which learning is presumed on the analysis of isolated rules through a deductive process that begins with the individual parts and then integrates them into the complete language system, thus forming a consolidation. For example:

An English teacher presents the present progressive (or present continuous, as some prefer) to a class of Brazilian students. He explains that this verbal tense is formed by the simple present of the auxiliary verb BE, followed by the present participle of the main verb, whose ending is the morpheme –ing. Then he places, on the board, sentences that illustrate this grammatical structure, such as, for example, the following sentences taken from the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen “You are always buying books”, “I am talking of possibilities, Charles”. The teacher translates these sentences into Portuguese. Then, he puts sentences in English on the board for the students to translate into Portuguese and sentences in Portuguese for them to translate into English, practicing this verb tense. Finally, he checks what the students did and corrects any errors that arise, providing a correct translation (Oliveira, 2014, p.76-77).

It is, therefore, a method based on the principles of focusing on grammatical analysis of the language, translating sentences from the target language into the mother tongue, and making limited use of the target language in communication between student and teacher. In this context, the teacher primarily uses the mother tongue to give instructions and read texts.

Under the Grammar-Translation method, the approach is centered on the theory that learning a language is most efficient through the analysis of its grammatical structure and translation into the mother tongue. The method translates this approach into a teaching plan that prioritizes translation exercises and detailed grammatical explanations, using activities such as translating texts, memorizing grammatical rules, and vocabulary exercises in which the student compares the target language with the mother tongue. Technically, it is a structured strategy for teaching and presenting the language, as stated by Richards and Rodgers (2014, p. 7):

While it may be true to say that the GT method is still widely used, it has no defenders. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a justification or foundation for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.

This statement highlights the absence of contemporary advocates and a solid theoretical foundation to justify its continued use. Although it remains widely used in some educational contexts, there is a lack of significant literature providing a theoretical justification or framework that connects the method to broader questions of language acquisition. As a result, it is often considered obsolete and disconnected from current pedagogical approaches, which

emphasize aspects such as interaction, active communication, and socio-cultural contextualization.

Communicative Competence

Throughout history, language learning has been analyzed through various approaches, each emphasizing particular aspects of the process of acquiring and using a foreign language, the present study uses the concepts of Communicative Competence from the perspective of how to learn a language and Translational Competence from the perspective of how to translate a language. While communicative competence emphasizes the ability to interact and communicate effectively in a language, translation competence involves the ability to transfer meaning between languages, taking into account linguistic and cultural differences. This section explores these two perspectives, highlighting their fundamental differences in the context of language learning.

The term 'competence' in relation to language learning was introduced by Noam Chomsky in the 1950s and used in contrast to another concept 'performance'. Competence refers to a person knowledge or understanding of a language, while performance is linked to the application of that knowledge in concrete situations. The introduction of a new idea in any field of knowledge or social practice often triggers reactions that range from acceptance to contestation. According to Hymes, the reception of the competence/performance dichotomy among linguists was shaped in this way:

When Aspects of the Theory of Syntax appeared, a first reaction was that Chomsky could not really be serious in dividing world language between competence and performance, defining the first in such a limited way (Hymes ,1972, p-32).

However, this cautious reception did not lead to the premature obsolescence of the concept; on the contrary, Chomsky who consolidated competence as a fundamental pillar for subsequent discussions. The amount of debate generated around this term is significant and is reflected in the expansion and redefinition promoted by various other linguists. The first expansion of the concept occurred with the emergence of the notion of 'communicative competence,' proposed by Hymes (1972), which integrates a social perspective into the idea of linguistic competence. “Competence refers to grammar competence. Finite knowledge of sentences independent of sociocultural characteristics” (Hymes, 1972, p. 15). This approach describes language as context-dependent, emphasizing the importance of sociocultural interaction between speakers. In this way, it goes beyond grammatical mastery and requires the ability to use language appropriately in a variety of communicative situations:

The world of linguistic theory comprises two parts: competence, which aims at tacit knowledge of the structure of the language, that is, knowledge that is not generally conscious nor susceptible to spontaneous description, but which is implicit in what the ideal speaker-listener is able to express. It is due to this knowledge that the speaker can produce and understand an infinite series of sentences and that we can say that language is creative. Performance is defined as being related to the processes of encoding and decoding (Hymes, 1972, p-271).

This expansion of the concept of competence incorporates the notion of communicative competence without, however, epistemologically breaking with Chomsky notions of competence and performance. On the contrary, Hymes integrates sociolinguistic elements, such as sociocultural relations, speaker's emotional states, and the social and functional rules that govern language use in specific contexts. From this sociolinguistic perspective, it can be concluded that competence and performance are inseparable. The concept reflects the recognition of a broader set of skills beyond mere grammatical mastery. In the context of language learning, communicative competence highlights the importance of both grammatical knowledge and the social rules that guide language use in specific situations, as well as the ability to adapt communication to cultural and social norms.

Thus, language learning must encompass both linguistic and sociocultural aspects to be truly effective. Hymes' (1972) Communicative Competence includes four aspects: (1) whether something is formally possible; (2) whether it is feasible given the means of implementation available; (3) whether it is appropriate in relation to the context in which it is used and evaluated; and (4) whether it is actually performed, as well as what its execution implies. In this sense, language learning results from interactions with the target culture and the real environments in which the language is used. The communicative function in the learning process and the authenticity of the content should therefore receive greater emphasis. Hymes highlights two main reasons why communicative competence is essential:

First, a person's competence in a language is partially and variably a function of other languages he or she may know or use. Furthermore, the spectrum of a language itself is partially and variably a function of its niche among other modes of communication, and may be broader or narrower in relation to these (...) Second, when we think of individuals as beings capable of participating in social life as language users, we really have to consider their ability to integrate language use with other modes of communication, such as such as gestures, facial expressions, sniffles and snorts, etc... (Hymes, 1972, p.37-38).

To acquire a language through Communicative Competence (CC), it is essential to develop a repertoire of speech acts and actively engage in interactions, reflecting on one's

linguistic acquisitions in comparison with those of other speakers. The internalization of attitudes, linguistic values, and social experiences are fundamental components of this process, as noted by Canale and Swain (1980, p. 4), communication is “the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two speakers, through the use of verbal or non-verbal, oral or visual symbols that produce understanding”. The integration of communicative codes, both verbal and non-verbal, plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of communicative competence.

CC is essential for language learning, as it enables learners to communicate effectively while understanding the subtleties and conventions that govern social interaction. By fostering a more comprehensive and functional learning process, it prepares speakers for real-life communication scenarios. Linguistic competence, in turn, provides the grammatical and structural foundation necessary for constructing accurate sentences. Together, these competences ensure that speakers not only master the structure of the language but also apply it appropriately and meaningfully in real-world interactions.

According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence comprises four subcomponents: grammatical competence (knowledge and application of linguistic rules), sociolinguistic competence (appropriate language use in social contexts), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence in texts), and strategic competence (managing communicative challenges). From this perspective, language learning involves not only mastering grammar but also adapting speech to context and interlocutors.

This approach is widely adopted in foreign language teaching and learning, with an emphasis on practical activities such as conversation, role plays, and group discussions, promoting the use of language in real-world situations and integrating knowledge, judgment, and skills in linguistic, operational, social, and strategic domains (Light & McNaughton, 2014). It is particularly effective for interacting more efficiently in culturally diverse environments (Ghasemimighani et al., 2020). This broader understanding acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of communication in the context of increasing globalization and interaction between diverse cultures, emphasizing the importance of Communicative Competence in a multilingual context.

In this scenario, communicating and learning a new language is not limited to mastering a single language but involves the ability to interact in several languages and utilize various modes of communication, including gestures and facial expressions. The communicative competence of a multilingual speaker is dynamic and varies depending on the situation. This approach challenges the traditional concept of communicative competence by considering the

complexities of the contemporary world, where communication transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. Rajagopalan highlights the significance of multilingualism in the modern context, stating that:

Talking about communicative competence in situations of multilingualism implies reviewing the very notion of communicative competence as Dell Hymes defined it in his classic text (Hymes, 1972). Because the communicative competence of a multilingual speaker is something in a permanent state of mutation (Rajagopalan, 2003, p.69-70).

The statement prompts us to reflect on the complexity of communicative competence when considering language learning within the context of multilingualism. It is essential to recognize that communicative competence is not limited to technical knowledge alone; it also encompasses the ability to adapt to diverse sociocultural norms and communicative practices, thereby enabling the learner to become a culturally literate communicator.

Translation Competence

From the perspective of learning to translate a language, the process involves a complex dynamic of intercultural mediation, in which translation competence—a term first introduced in the mid-1980s—emerges as a construct that goes beyond simple linguistic transfer. Translation Competence encompasses the ability to decode and reconfigure the multiple layers of meaning within a text, including semantic, pragmatic, and cultural aspects that permeate both the source and target languages. According to Hurtado Albir (2001/2011, p. 41), translation is “an interpretative and cognitive process that consists of reformulating a text through another language, prepared within a social context and with a specific purpose”. In this sense, translation is not limited to the literal transposition of terms; rather, it requires the translator to possess a heightened sensitivity to capture communicative intentions, discursive nuances, and cultural specificities.

It is therefore a specialized field of knowledge, encompassing a set of skills and abilities that require expertise beyond mere fluency in two languages. While bilingualism involves communicative competence, translation necessitates the ability to interpret and transfer meanings across different cultural contexts. According to Hurtado Albir (2005, p. 19): “although any bilingual speaker has communicative competence in the languages they speak, not every bilingual has translation competence”. Thus, being bilingual does not equate to possessing translation competence, as simply communicating between two languages does not guarantee the ability to translate. This acquisition occurs through a multifaceted process, built

upon three essential concepts: competence, specialized knowledge, and knowledge acquisition. Generativist linguists base their approach on two principles:

Competence and performance stands out as the ability to produce varied sentences, in other words, the subject knows how to produce sentences according to an internal grammar, in which we already know how to distinguish a grammatical or ungrammatical sentence. (Chomsky, 1978, p-12).

In this context, competence refers to an understanding of the organization of language. For acquisition to be effective, it implies that the individual possesses specialized knowledge, encompassing a wide range of expertise that can be applied to problem solving, distinguishing between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1983). Hurtado Albir states:

According to Anderson, declarative knowledge consists of knowing what. It is easy to verbalize, it is acquired through exposure and its process is essentially controlled. Procedural knowledge, in turn, consists of knowing how. It is difficult to verbalize, is acquired through practice and is essentially processed automatically (Hurtado Albir, 2005, p-21).

This distinction between these types of knowledge provides a clear perspective that is fundamental to human learning. Declarative knowledge, being easily verbalized, tends to be acquired in theoretical environments, such as classrooms or through reading, where direct exposure to information is the primary means of absorption. This reflects a more controlled process in which the learner consciously focuses on what is being learned. Procedural knowledge, on the other hand, involves practical understanding that emerges through repeated practice, whether related to motor skills or cognitive abilities. The challenge in verbalizing procedural knowledge lies in the fact that, as competence is developed, it becomes progressively automatic.

The learner no longer needs explicitly think about the steps involved; they are executed fluidly and almost unconsciously. Although distinct, these two types of knowledge are not isolated, as Hurtado Albir (2005, p. 21) states “the study of specialized knowledge (approached by cognitive psychology, pedagogy, etc.) has special relevance for the study of translation competence”. This implies that, in order to achieve an advanced level of expertise in any domain, the learner must not only accumulate information but also develop the ability to apply it effectively.

This learning process is dynamic and cyclical, involving the assimilation, practice, and continuous revision of knowledge. Learning strategies, such as elaboration, are essential for

optimizing this process, fostering a deeper understanding and promoting autonomy in cognitive development. Various componential models aim comprehensively describe the elements that constitute translation competence, including linguistic, textual, thematic, cultural, and documentary knowledge, as well as transferability and the strategic component (Hurtado Albir, 1999). The divergence of criteria regarding the functioning of translation competence highlights the complexity involved in its description, as well as the diversity of the subcomponents that constitute it.

Although translation competence has received limited attention among academic researchers, the process of its acquisition is even less explored, with few studies dedicated to understanding how translators develop this skill over time and the factors that influence this learning. Harris and Sherwood (1978) identify a natural translation ability, regarded as innate and universal among bilingual speakers. They argue that this ability manifests from childhood and evolves in stages. Thus, natural translation can be considered a fundamental foundation for translation competence. Toury (1995) proposes a model for transforming a bilingual individual into a translator, which he refers to as the socialization of translation.

Toury (1995) suggests that translation is a communicative act and, as such, an interactive process in which feedback from the social environment plays a crucial role. Shreve (1997) defines translation competence as a specific form of communicative competence, distinguished by the fact that not everyone possesses this particular skill. Therefore, translation competence is not an innate ability; rather, it develops along a continuum, from natural translation to professional (constructed) translation.

Hurtado Albir (2005) discusses the process of acquiring translation competence when deliberately guided within the educational context, referring to the didactics of translation. This approach consists of two main components: the traductological framework and the pedagogical framework. Hurtado Albir begins with the premise that any educational approach must be based on both the content and the processes involved in learning that content. The translational framework highlights translation as a textual, communicative, and cognitive activity. Translation is defined as an interpretative and communicative process that involves reformulating a text in another language for a specific purpose and within a social context. Translation competence is understood as the set of knowledge and abilities necessary to carry out translation practice. It represents a developmental process that evolves from novice (pre-translatory) knowledge to specialized (translatory) knowledge, encompassing the use of interrelated strategies and sub-competences.

The holistic model developed by the PACTE group (Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación.) presents an empirical and comprehensive approach, grounded in the observation of translator’s performance. This model highlights the multifaceted nature of translation as a communicative practice and posits that translation competence should be conceptualized as specialized knowledge, distinct from bilingual competence. Consequently, translation competence is recognized as a specific category that demands a diverse range of skills and knowledge. In this context, the model below delineates five primary sub-competences, which are described as follows:

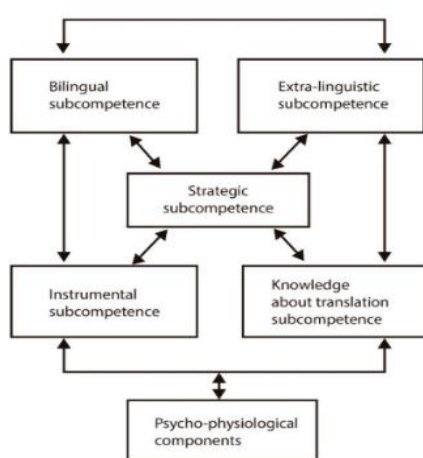


Figure 1 – Pacte’s CT Model

Source: PACTE, 2017

Bilingual sub-competence: This refers to the ability to function effectively in two languages. It encompasses pragmatic, sociolinguistic, textual, and lexical-grammatical knowledge, which are essential for ensuring that the translator can comprehend and produce coherent texts in both languages.

Extra linguistic sub-competence: This involves knowledge of the world, culture, and specific aspects related to the content being translated. It includes relevant encyclopedic and cultural knowledge, which are crucial for enabling the translator to grasp the source text’s context and appropriately adapt the translation for the target audience.

Translation knowledge sub-competence: This comprises both theoretical and practical knowledge of translation principles, including methods, processes, and potential challenges. It equips the translator with the necessary tools to handle various types of translation and effectively address specific difficulties.

Instrumental sub-competence: This refers to the use of documentation tools and information and communication technologies (ICT) in translation. It includes proficiency in translation software and search resources, which are essential for enhancing efficiency and enabling quick access to relevant information.

Strategic sub-competence: This encompasses operational strategies that ensure the effectiveness of the translation process, including the ability to plan, evaluate, and adjust the process as needed. This sub-competence is considered central, as it regulates the application of the other sub-competencies, allowing translators to identify challenges and adapt their approach accordingly.

Psychophysiological components: In addition to sub-competencies, the model also considers psychophysiological factors that influence translation competence, such as cognitive components (memory, perception, attention), attitudinal aspects (curiosity, perseverance, rigor, motivation), and cognitive abilities (creativity, logical reasoning, analysis, synthesis).

The model emphasizes that the acquisition of translation competence is a dynamic and cyclical process involving the continuous restructuring of declarative and procedural knowledge (Hurtado Albir, 2005). Learning is not linear; rather, it evolves as translators gain practice and experience. Consequently, translation competence develops through the automation of decision-making and critical reflection on translational choices.

According to Hurtado Albir (2005), the pedagogical framework in translation didactics explores both learning and teaching theories. Learning theories can be categorized into two broad groups: behaviorist theories, which focus on environmental influences and observable student behavior, analyzing actions rather than cognitive processes; and cognitive theories, which emphasize the mental processes underlying behavior, particularly the acquisition and processing of knowledge. Within cognitive theories, constructivism stands out, proposing that individuals actively construct their own learning based on experience. Despite variations among constructivist approaches, they share the common principle that learners play an active role in their educational development. Teaching theories, in contrast, are particularly relevant to curriculum design, which involves decision-making and actions related to the planning and structuring of instruction.

Traditionally, the school curriculum were focused primarily on content; however, contemporary approaches adopt a more integrated perspective, encompassing objectives, content, methodology, and assessment. In translation didactics, the task-based approach refers to a methodology centered on specific tasks that students must complete as part of the teaching-

learning process. The primary goal of this approach is to facilitate the acquisition of translation competence through practical activities that simulate real-world translation scenarios. It emphasizes the process of knowledge construction, rather than focusing solely on the final product, incorporates a series of interconnected activities that require the application of various translation sub-competences (Hurtado Albir, 2005). Throughout the course, students are encouraged to make informed decisions, resolve translation issues, plan strategies, and critically reflect on their outcomes. This fosters the development of strategic competence, which is essential for translators. The tasks include translating specialized texts, revising translations, researching terminology, and creating glossaries. Each task is designed to promote active learning and critical engagement with the translation process.

According to Hurtado Albir (2005), learning objectives are organized into blocks, each corresponding to sub-competencies of translation competence. Methodological objectives relate to instrumental subcompetence, guiding the use of tools and strategies in the translation process. Contrastive objectives are connected to extra linguistic sub competence, encouraging the comparison of languages and cultures. Professional objectives are linked to the subcompetence of translation knowledge, preparing the translator for the job market. Textual objectives, which correspond to bilingual sub competence, focus on the analysis and interpretation of different types of texts. These objectives work in an integrated manner, fostering effective translation competence and equipping the translator to address professional challenges.

On the other hand, Christiane Nord developed an approach based on Scope Theory, formulated by Hans Vermeer, which posits that translation should be guided by the purpose or function that the translated text will serve in the target culture. According to Nord (2010, p. 24), "the range of possible translation goals is limited by the responsibility the translator has towards the participants in the translation interaction," suggesting that the choice of translation strategies should be determined by the specific purpose of the translation, which may vary depending on the target audience and the socio-cultural context. From this perspective, the translator acts as a mediator between two cultures, with the role extending beyond linguistic equivalence to encompass functional adequacy. Nord (2009) further introduces the principle of loyalty, which involves respecting the intentions and expectations of all participants in the translation act. The translator must uphold the author's intentions, address the reader's needs, and meet the client's expectations, ensuring that the translation is both ethical and culturally appropriate.

The common aspects between Nord and Hurtado Albir proposals include the consideration of both intratextual and extratextual elements in the analysis of the source text, as well as recognizing translation as a complex communicative act. However, the approaches differ in their focus: Nord emphasizes pre-translational analysis and the medium (channel), while Albir takes into account socio-historical and ideological contexts, employing a broader perspective to characterize the communicative situation. Both proposals are complementary and essential for understanding the process of learning to translate.

The following section introduces the Duolingo app, the focus of this research, detailing its components and organizational structure, the integration of new resources and methodologies, and its significance within the context of mobile language learning.

Duolingo app

Duolingo is an application developed by Luis von Ahn, a prominent computer scientist who, along with his students at Carnegie Mellon University, created the CAPTCHA program in 2000. This tool revolutionized web security by enabling the reformulation of words to prevent misuse by robots and automated systems. In 2011, von Ahn shifted his research focus to the educational field, leveraging his previous work to create the Duolingo platform, with the primary goal of providing a free, effective, and ad-free language-learning tool accessible to all users (Ahn, 2011). The platform has since evolved, incorporating features such as Duolingo for Schools (2013), Duolingo for Business (2015), and the Duolingo Certification Test (2016), which cater to the specific needs of students, educators, and organizations. In its current iteration, Duolingo also offers additional services through Duolingo Plus, a paid subscription that expands the platform's functionality and introduces new products, such as Duolingo Math, which benefits the STEM fields.

Duocon 2024, Duolingo's annual conference, introduced significant innovations focused on the integration of AI technologies to enhance language learning. One of the highlights was the introduction of a video chat feature powered by AI, available to Duolingo Max subscribers. This feature allows users to engage in realistic dialogues with the character Lily, adapting to the learner's skill level and providing an interactive, personalized experience. Apps like Duolingo have gained popularity as language learning tools, offering courses in a wide range of languages and being recognized for their gamified approach. According to Fardo (2013), gamification in education involves incorporating game elements into learning processes with the goal of increasing student engagement and commitment. The approach aims to create a

more engaging and rewarding learning experience, making the process of learning more enjoyable.

For English-speaking users, the platform provides more than 20 language options, ranging from French to Esperanto, and even Latin. However, for speakers of other languages, such as Portuguese, the selection is more limited, with only five language options, including English and Italian. Given its global significance, the most studied language on the platform is English.

Over the past two years, we have seen an increased interest in less studied languages — for example, in 2020, Irish became the most popular language in Ireland. However, in 2022, we saw a return to the predominant languages, with English, French and Spanish firmly in the ranks of the most popular languages in the world. Available at: <<https://blog.duolingo.com/pt/>> Accessed on: September 3rd. 2024.

It is essential to highlight the dynamics observed in the field of language teaching and learning, where, despite periods of increased visibility for less conventional languages in certain regions, the dominance of global languages quickly reasserted itself. This phenomenon indicates that, even amid growing interest in local or less widely spoken languages, the demand for learning globally recognized languages such as English, French, and Spanish remains substantial. Duolingo is often associated with the concept of gamification in education, which involves the integration of elements characteristic of games into learning environments, aimed at enhancing student motivation and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011). The variety of tasks on the platform aids in the development of different language skills, while the gamification aspect transforms learning into a game-like experience, keeping users motivated and engaged. This concept in foreign language teaching emerged as a result of incorporating game elements into virtual learning environments. As described by Fardo (2013), gamification must be understood as follows:

[...] the use of elements traditionally found in games, such as narrative, feedback system, reward system, conflict, cooperation, competition, clear objectives and rules, levels, trial and error, fun, interaction, interactivity, among others, in other activities that are not directly associated with games, with the purpose of trying to obtain the same degree of involvement and motivation that we normally find in players when interacting with good games (Fardo, 2013, p. 2).

This approach alleviates the apprehension associated with learning a new language, rendering the process more enjoyable and less intimidating. Quadros (2014) identifies the layout and execution of Duolingo as a key example of gamification, It is important to highlight the use of a user performance rating system, demonstrated through the display of progress bars

and the limitation of errors, represented by hearts. Users earn experience points (XPs) by completing lessons, engage in friendly competition with others, and receive visual rewards for achieving daily goals. Each course on Duolingo is structured as a "learning tree," consisting of several sections, each dedicated to a specific topic, such as greetings, family, shopping, and so on. These sections are further subdivided into units that focus on vocabulary, grammar, and phrases related to the respective themes. The units are arranged in increasing levels of difficulty, allowing users to review and reinforce their knowledge as they advance.

The tasks within Duolingo are organized around thematic and grammatical topics, utilizing repetition and translation as the primary strategies. These tasks include translating words and phrases, oral repetition exercises, and multiple-choice questions. According to Garcia (2012), translation is the predominant method employed in Duolingo. Although this approach had been largely abandoned for some time, it has recently made a resurgence in educational software. Under analysis in Duolingo, the content is often repetitive, decontextualized, and, in some instances, presents artificial information that may lack realistic semantic meaning. Nevertheless, this method proves effective at the initial levels, becoming more complex as users advance. What distinguishes the app is its incorporation of human supervision in the translation process, in contrast to relying solely on machine translation. Human supervision, typically provided by linguistics experts, ensures that translations are reviewed, adjusted, with the cultural and linguistic context of each language.

There is currently a rapid shift from the use of traditional technologies, such as laptops, to mobile technologies, a trend directly correlated with changes in how people learn (Goundar, 2011). In the classroom, most students possess mobile devices, such as tablets or smartphones. One area of education that has benefited from the impact of mobile technology is language learning. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) emphasizes continuity, spontaneity in interaction, and access across various contexts of use. This approach represents a significant evolution in the way languages are taught and learned, leveraging mobile technologies to provide more flexible, personalized, and interactive learning experiences.

The use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) not only facilitates access to educational resources anytime and anywhere, but also promotes collaboration and communication between users and native speakers, thereby enriching the learning process (Pegrum, 2014). Duolingo is one of the most popular platforms within the MALL context, offering a variety of activities to practice the structural aspects of foreign languages. The app aims to explore the possibilities and limitations of the playful use of technology for second

language learning, in alignment with the concept of erasing the boundaries between learning and entertainment—transforming interaction, learning, and content—proposed by Arruda (2013). As a result of this development, language learning through mobile devices has significantly grown, enabling users to study a second language autonomously, anytime and anywhere (Loewen et al., 2019).

Currently, more than 300 million people use Duolingo to learn new languages (Shortt, 2021), and over time, the app has established itself as a successful example of the application of MALL principles. However, despite the promise shown by MALL, several challenges remain. Internet connectivity issues have been identified as a major obstacle for language learners (Nuraeni et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is significant potential for improving users' language skills, including speaking skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Darmawati, 2018). As mobile technologies continue to evolve, the use of MALL is likely to play an increasingly important role in language learning, offering new opportunities for both users and learners.

METHODOLOGY

To address the research question guiding this study, "If and how Translation Competence is included in a language teaching and learning application," a qualitative approach was adopted. This methodological choice is grounded in the objective of this approach, which is to "describe, understand, and explain a particular object of study" (Silveira & Córdova, 2009, p.7). The primary focus of this research is to describe and analyze Duolingo, a language teaching and learning application that offers both free and partially free access. For this purpose, a theoretically grounded analysis was conducted, drawing on the references that constitute the theoretical framework of this study.

In accordance with the nature of the data, the research is classified as descriptive/explanatory. This classification based on the aim of "describing the object, characteristics, and related problems, thereby presenting maximum accuracy in relation to the facts and phenomena" (Almeida, 2014, p. 26). Additionally, the study is explanatory in nature, as its goal is to identify the factors that influence or contribute to the manifestation of the phenomena under investigation (Triviños, 1987). Specifically, the research seeks to understand how the varying complexities of the translation tasks within Duolingo affects the activation of the sub-competencies of Translation Competence. The study focuses on comparing two distinct

sections of a translation corpus, selected for their differences in textual and grammatical complexity.

The sample consisted of a set of translation tasks taken from the app, specifically from sections 4 and 8. These sections were selected based on the variation in complexity between them: Section 4 comprises short, low-complexity sentences that allow for the development of basic translation skills, while Section 8 includes longer and more complex sentences, featuring idiomatic expressions and cultural nuances, thus requiring a more intense mobilization of subcompetences.

Data collection for the study was carried out by capturing screenshots from a mobile device during the performance of translation tasks on the platform. The following steps were followed: The first step involved researching app stores (Apple Store, Google Play Store) in the 'education' category, where Duolingo consistently holds the top position in both stores. The second step consisted of capturing screenshots of the translation tasks in sections 4 and 8, where each screenshot includes: the original sentence in the target language, the user's proposed translation, and the feedback provided by Duolingo, indicating whether the translation was correct or incorrect, along with the correction suggestion offered by the app's system.

In the final step, the screenshots were organized into a table, categorized by section, and numbered to facilitate reference. Each screenshot was analyzed according to its characteristics, complexity, and the type of feedback received. The data analysis was conducted through a comparative approach, using a theoretical framework based on the subcompetences that constitute Translation Competence (TC model by PACTE). The analysis included a qualitative review, in which each screenshot from both sections was examined in terms of the subcompetences that were activated, highlighting how sentence complexity influenced the mobilization of translation competence.

To classify cognitive demands, the tasks were categorized according to the level of cognitive effort they required from the user, with emphasis on the most relevant subcompetences in each section. This helped identify activation patterns and the abilities necessary for the effective completion of each task. The data were interpreted in light of Translation Competence theory, aiming to understand the implications of the results for the use of translations in a language-learning app.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the following practices were adopted: the discussion of results was contextualized in relation to previous studies on Translation Competence, allowing for broader and more grounded comparisons, and the data

analysis was adapted from similar studies that use Duolingo as the object of investigation, thereby ensuring consistency in the interpretations.

RESULTS

The objective of this study is to analyze translation tasks on the language teaching and learning platform Duolingo. The choice of this research object is justified by the platform's growing popularity and its academic relevance as a broad field for studies related to language acquisition, translation, and the application of digital pedagogical models. To support this analysis, the study draws on the methodological approaches discussed by Sataka (2019), who investigated the effectiveness of Duolingo's approaches and their implications for language teaching, offering a critical perspective on how translation activities are implemented on the platform. The analysis of translation tasks will be conducted based on the Translation Competence model proposed by the PACTE group (2017), which provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the sub-competences involved in the translation process.

This model comprises six interrelated sub-competences: bilingual, extra linguistic, instrumental, strategic, translation knowledge, and psychophysiological components. By applying this theoretical framework, the study aims to identify how Duolingo's translation tasks integrate these sub-competences, with particular emphasis on the comparative analysis of sections 4 and 8 of the application.

Section 4

Section 4 is characterized by low-complexity translation tasks, predominantly composed of short, simple sentences. The cognitive and translation demands are minimal, primarily activating basic translation sub-competences. In Figure 2, the task consists of filling in gaps, requiring the user to select appropriate words to complete the sentence in both languages. This activity primarily engages bilingual sub-competence, as it involves linguistic ability to identify the correct lexicon. In Figure 3, the task involves translating idiomatic expressions or common figures of speech. Beyond linguistic knowledge, this requires an understanding of simple cultural references, thus engaging both bilingual and extra linguistic sub-competences.

Figure 4 presents a comparison between the source text and its translation, asking the learner to assess the adequacy of the equivalence. The justification for the use of strategic sub-competence lies in the necessity of critical decision-making and revision skills to evaluate the

fidelity and fluency of the translation. Finally, Figure 5 activates bilingual sub-competence, as it involves linguistic analysis and may require the use of basic tools to verify grammatical rules.

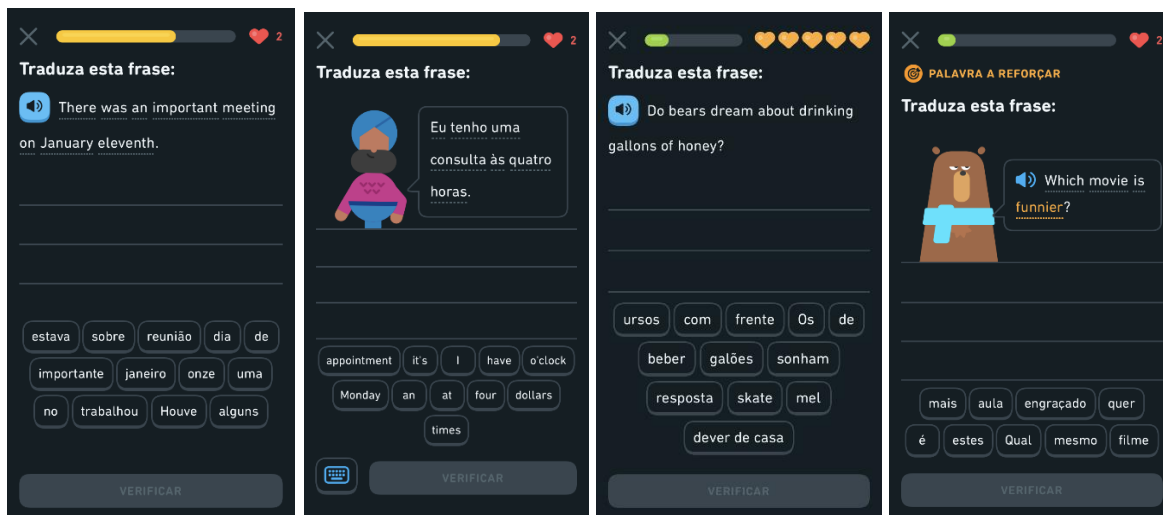


Figure 2-translation task Figure 3-translation task Figure 4-translation task Figure 5- translation task
 Source: Screenshots from the researcher’s iPhone in the Duolingo app, section 4, collected on August 10, 2024.

This section consists of simple sentences, making it suitable for translators in the early stages of their training, as it allows them to consolidate fundamental competences such as vocabulary recognition and grammatical structure identification. The short tasks with basic structures primarily engage bilingual sub-competence, as the linguistic constructions are straightforward, lacking complex cultural or idiomatic nuances. Consequently, the need to activate extra linguistic and textual sub-competences is minimal.

Section 8

In contrast, the analysis of Section 8 revealed translation tasks of greater complexity, featuring longer sentences, idioms expressions, and cultural references. These elements contribute to a higher degree of difficulty, activating elaborate sub-competences and requiring a deeper practical and theoretical application of translation knowledge, engaging multiple sub-competences simultaneously.

Figure 6 presents a critical analysis of a complex passage containing multiple cultural references and implicit connotations. In this case, both strategic and extra linguistic sub-competences must be activated, as the task demands planning and problem-solving skills, along with an in-depth understanding of cultural elements to ensure accurate interpretation.

Figure 7 presents a proofreading and self-correction exercise, activating strategic sub-competence and maybe psychophysiological components. This task involves self-correction skills and emotional control, highlighting the need for high levels of concentration and decision-making abilities. Figure 8 introduces an adaptive translation task, in which the user must adjust the tone and style of a sentence to appeal to a specific audience. In this case, the activation of translation knowledge and extra linguistic sub-competences is required, as the task demands both comprehension and adaptation according to the intended recipient. In addition, figure 9 demonstrates the activation of two sub-competences: strategic and bilingual. This task necessitates the cooperation of multiple sub-competences, from initial planning to execution and final revision.

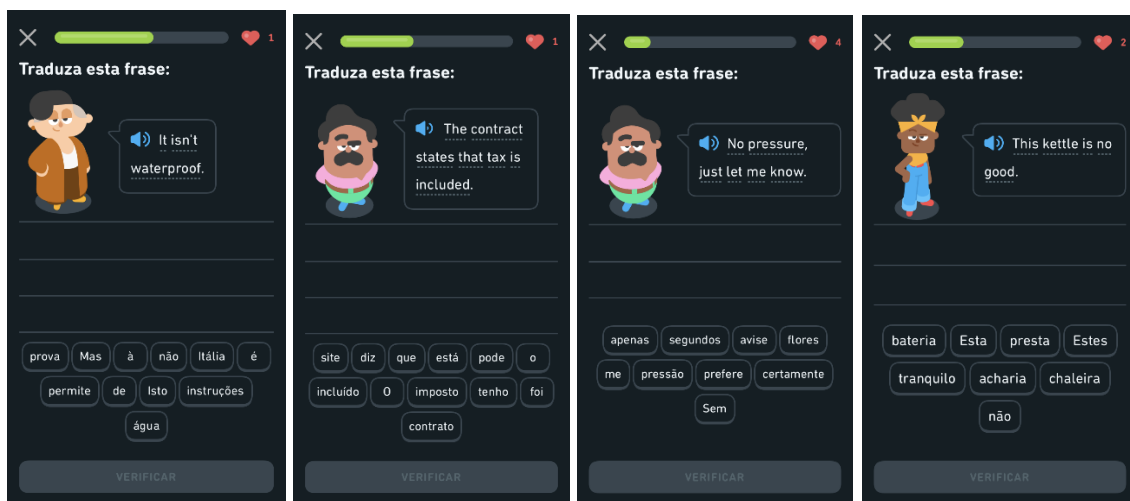


Figure 6-translation task Figure 7- translation task Figure 8-translation task Figure 9- translation task

Source: Screenshots from the researcher's iPhone in the Duolingo app, section 8, collected on August 10, 2024.

The tasks in Section 8 are significantly more complex. The sentences are longer and often incorporate idiomatic expressions and cultural constructs, requiring an advanced activation of bilingual sub-competence. In this context, users must demonstrate a deep understanding of both languages, which involves not only recognizing vocabulary and grammar but also accurately interpreting idioms and metaphors that have no direct equivalents in the target language. Extra linguistic sub-competence plays a central role in this section, as the sentences contain cultural and social references that necessitate adaptation to the target language context.

The efficient translation of these sentences requires users to mobilize knowledge beyond language, considering cultural and pragmatic factors that influence interpretation and textual production. Textual sub-competence is essential, as translations often require restructuring to

ensure cohesion in the target language. Instrumental sub-competence is also frequently activated, as tools like dictionaries and glossaries help resolve lexical and grammatical issues. Additionally, strategic sub-competence is crucial, as users must assess the best translation option for semantic and pragmatic fidelity. The high complexity of tasks also intensifies the engagement of psychophysiological sub-competence, demanding greater cognitive effort and concentration. Consequently, this section requires a broader and more advanced activation of these sub-competences, reflecting a higher level of translation competence.

The complex phrases and idioms expressions in this section necessitate not only an advanced understanding of the language but also a deep extra linguistic knowledge, encompassing cultural and contextual elements that influence translation.

DISCUSSION

The comparison between Sections 4 and 8 reveals a clear progression in the level of challenge presented to users, reinforcing the importance of exposing learners to tasks with varying levels of complexity for the comprehensive development of translation competence in a language teaching and learning platform. Section 4, for instance, focuses on tasks that require basic bilingual sub-competence, enabling users consolidate fundamental skills such as lexical and grammatical recognition, without the need for complex tasks like cultural adaptation. This aligns with studies suggesting that translation competence develops incrementally, with simpler tasks laying the foundation for more complex challenges (Pym, 2013). Conversely, Section 8 introduces greater difficulty, particularly in activating extra linguistic sub-competence.

The need to address idioms and cultural metaphors reinforces the notion that users require not only in-depth linguistic knowledge but also the ability to adapt sentences to diverse cultural contexts, a crucial competence for effective translation (Nord, 1997). Such tasks encourage reflection and strategic decision-making, underscoring the significance of strategic sub-competence in the translation process. These findings align with Kiraly's (2000) theory of translation as a dynamic, cognitive process, where continuous complex decisions must be made. Additionally, the observed variation in complexity between the sections emphasizes the importance of instrumental sub-competence, as translators rely on support tools to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of their translation choices, particularly when addressing specialized vocabulary or distinct cultural contexts (Göpferich, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

The advancement of mobile technologies has opened up new possibilities in language teaching and learning, particularly through mobile devices. In this context, this study conducted a descriptive-explanatory analysis of the potential of the Duolingo application for the development of Translation Competence, making unprecedented contributions by examining a widely used digital tool from an underexplored perspective. This study expands the understanding of Duolingo, a tool primarily associated with linguistic competence and language teaching, but rarely analyzed from the specific angle of translation. The results of this analysis indicated that, although Duolingo focus is on the development of linguistic competence, it also presents translation tasks that engage certain translation sub-competencies, particularly those related to linguistic proficiency and basic understanding of translation equivalence. The analysis of translation tasks in Sections 4 and 8 revealed that the app provides a practical, albeit limited, introduction to translation, with gamification elements such as immediate feedback, competitions, losses, and rewards making the learning process more engaging and attractive.

The novelty of this work resided in the application of the PACTE model to analyze translation tasks on a popular digital platform designed for language learning, exploring the intersection between educational technologies and the development of Translation Competence. This approach highlighted both the potential and the limitations of Duolingo as a tool for translation practices. The study, however, was limited by the absence of exercises with greater cultural contextualization and tasks that demand extensive critical reflection and strategic thinking. It is important to acknowledge that the analysis was confined to the iOS version of the app and focused exclusively on the translation tasks available on the platform. Ultimately, it is hoped that this study will contribute significantly to Translation Studies by fostering a critical dialogue between the use of mobile technologies and translation training, underscoring the possibilities, limitations, and avenues for future research. It is believed that the novelty and relevance of this work can serve as a foundation for offering insights into the effectiveness and limitations of translation, in line with contemporary demands and the development of Translation Competence.

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