

Translation Competence: Between Evolution and Revolution

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The increasing sophistication and customizability of large language models (LLMs) and artificial intelligence (AI) for translation are driving the adoption of automation beyond simple use by inexperienced end users, extending the role of unedited machine translation even into professional environments and domains once considered unsuitable, such as legal and audiovisual translation. In this context, it is entirely reasonable to question whether human translators can thrive in this AI-driven (r)evolution and whether training new translators is merely an exercise in futile persistence. This talk will explore these concerns by outlining the evolution of translation competence, tracing its development from early to contemporary conceptualisations. This examination will highlight how the understanding of this concept and the identity of the (professional) translator have adapted and evolved through various theoretical and technological revolutions. The discussion will also delve into current professional standards, such as ISO 5060:2024, and their implications for the skills expected of aspiring translators. Lastly, it will summarise the preliminary findings of the LeMaTTT project (Quinci 2023, 2024), showing how TC affects the use of automation by trainee translators.