



The Feasibility and Applicability of Grounded Theory Methodology in Translation Studies: Developing Translator Competence

Mehrangiz Anvarhaghi (Corresponding Author),

Ph.D. Student of Translation Studies, Department of English Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran; Faculty Member of University College of Nabi Akram, Tabriz, Iran
Email: m_anvarhagigi@hotmail.com

Farzaneh Farahzad,

Full Professor of Translation Studies, Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran
Email: farahzadatu@yahoo.com

Hussein Mollanazar,

Associate Professor of Translation Studies, Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran
Email: hus.mollanazar@gmail.com

Abstract

The development of sociological approach to the study of translation makes it possible for the researchers to adopt different methodology to develop new theoretical formulations and concepts. These formulations are arrived at through the interaction with those being studied through the interpretation of real social world and meanings of the participants involved in the translation/social event. Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) is ideally suited to areas of research where there should be an understanding of the social processes at work. However, the adoption of Grounded Theory (GT) approach in translation studies and translation education is rare if not inapplicable. The debates and suspicions for using GT in terms of its rigor are continuously confusing those who are relatively new to qualitative inductive research. The data collection and sampling and data analysis in this methodology require high levels of rigor and reflection on the part of the researchers whose previous experience, assumptions, and the manner of transcription and data elicitation are very important, but are often neglected by some researchers. That is why the present paper tends to discuss some key arguable issues of undertaking and applying GT research for qualitative researchers in the area of translation. The paper provides a comprehensive review of GTM and its feasibility by demonstrating examples from a research project on constructing a model for developing translator competence. The project is part of the author's doctoral study into conceptualizing the experience of the university students' learning translation and their developing the translator competence. The present paper, however, intends to focus on the application and documentation of GTM in translation education. A review of literature on GT and the author's practical experience of undertaking an empirical study into discipline form the approach to addressing the issue.

Keywords: Grounded Theory Method, Coding System, Theoretical Formulation, Translator Competence

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Introduction

Grounded Theory is ideally suited to areas of research where there is little understanding of the social processes at work. (Hunter et al., 2011)

Discovery of the Grounded Theory Methodology in the areas of social studies transformed methodological debates and inspired generations of qualitative researchers. Glaser (1992) and Strauss (1967) combined their contrasting and competing epistemological positions, i.e. Glaser's Columbia University positivism and Strauss's Chicago school pragmatism and field studies, to propose Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) for conducting inductive qualitative data analysis, whereby researchers could be able to build their own substantive theories. Such theories consist of "abstract rendering of specific social phenomena" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7) that had foundation in systematically analyzed data. Pervading the GTM, Strauss's Chicago heritage looked at human beings as active agents in their lives and worlds while creating the social structures and meanings. Strauss (1987) included notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjectivity in meanings, problem-solving practices, and open-ended study of social actions to grounded theory. In embracing such diverse social subjects, GTM found audiences and turned into an impetus for a revolution in qualitative data analysis, which gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century. The explicit strategies and the call for developing theories from qualitative data spread throughout disciplines and profession, and inspired new generation of the social scientists and professionals. From 1990s, in Translation Studies, there has also been a call for attention to the human agents involved in all facets of the phenomenon of translation. Although the kind of methodology employed in sociologically-oriented translation researches were apart from inductive qualitative traditions, some scholars started to take social approaches to translation practice and viewed it as a social action.

The growing trend in the field of Translation Studies is for development of a new sociological approach to the study of translation, where the researchers attempt to develop new theoretical formulation and concepts trying to describe, explain, and explore the social aspect and human agency and its link with the translated texts as well as the context in which the translators interact with both texts and their readers. In this trend - highlighting the translator's agency as well as the other participants in the activity - the researchers should follow certain methodological trajectory which results in research works with certain objectives and characteristics. One of the early works focusing on the translators as human agents in the action dates back to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813, cited in Munday, 2012, p. 46), who for the first time, distinct from other translation theorist of that time, distinguishes two types of translators i.e. the "Dolmetscher" translating commercial texts and "Übersetzer" who translates scholarly and literary text. He put the great emphasis on the translators' agency by authorizing them to take on their own strategy of either "naturalizing" or "alienating". The real question here in the act of translation, according to Schleiermacher, is how to bring the ST writer and the TT reader together. His response to this question was not the use of the word-for-word and sense-for-sense, literal, faithful, and free

translation; instead, Schleiermacher (1813) proposed that there should be only two ways open for the “true” translator: “Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him” (cited in Munday, 2012, p. 49).

Although Schleiermacher has influenced almost every modern translation theorist in one way or another - in particular the Venuti’s “foreignization” and “domestication” opposites - his idea of translators as the human agents has not been taken by any scholars until the time the “translatorial action” model was proposed by Justa Holz-Mänttari (1984) (*Translatorisches Handeln: Theorie und Methode*) that takes up concepts from communication theory and action theory. The idea of action, especially of a translatorial one, is the most important part of pragmatics and sociology. Holz-Mänttari (1984) tried to provide a model and to produce guidelines that can be applied to a wide range of professional translation situations. According to Munday (2012), “the value of Holz-Mänttari’s work is the placing of translation (or at least the professional non-literary translation) within its sociocultural context, including the interplay between the translator and the initiator” (Munday, 2012, p. 121). In Holz-Mänttari’s Translatorial Action translation is viewed as purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction, and translators are viewed as “experts in cross-cultural communication” who may be called on to do many things and may act as a “reader” a “texter”, and “adviser” at the same time. The next step she has taken is to specify the translator tasks in what she calls “translator profile” in which she addresses different types of decisions translators make in the different translation situations. Schäffner (1998) holds that Holz-Mänttari’s translatorial action “is relevant for all types of translation, and the theory is held to provide guidelines for every decision to be taken by translator” (p. 5). Although her model is intended to address guidelines for “intercultural transfer”, it fails to consider the kinds of terms existing in culturally-oriented and sociological models proposed by system theories and “cultural” and “ideological turns”. She was also challenging the traditional role of linguistics in the training of translators, holding that translator need to do more than translate and get involved in some very social processes such as managing terminology, post-editing, reviewing, project management, and moving into international market and public relation (Pym, 2014).

In 1991, Douglas Robinson published *The Translator’s Turn* where there has been a call for attention to the human agents in the process of translation. The emphasis made on the interactive and communicative role of translators at that time made Chesterman (2009) to suggest a new branch called “translator studies” to be added to the Holmes’ (1970) map of the discipline and following this some scholars such as Bassnett and Bush (2006), Sherry Simon (1996), Inghilleri (2005), Wolf (2012), Berman (2004), Tymoczko (2003), Venuti (2008) and issued publications that proposed some theoretical frameworks in which they tried to explore and explain the ways in which translators as human agent in translation act interact with the source and target texts and their context of production and perception from a sociological, ideological, and gender-based perspective. Much of the research work they did is conceptual in the sense that they applied the concepts and theories from sociology and related disciplines to develop and construct novel and productive modes of studying

and understanding the very nature of translation. However, this does not mean that the sociologically-oriented research projects cannot be empirical with qualitative data: some of the studies are empirical as they are done on observing the human agents and can be categorized as participant-oriented research. Several examples of such research project where qualitative data were analyzed are Angelelli (2007), Chesterman (2009), Chan (2010), and Bernardini and Castagnoli (2008). These studies resulted in either description of the phenomenon under investigation and testing and verification of certain theories feeding the Descriptive Translation Studies or building models and theories while adding to the theoretical branch of the field. Therefore, the key characteristics and purpose of these works can be description and theory verification/building.

As to descriptive purpose of these sociologically-oriented research works, they are characterized by the way data are either elicited or analyzed. The data can be and are elicited and collected using the methods such as questionnaire surveys, interviews (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured), and focus group. The three methods mentioned above are, of course, staples of the sociological research and are necessary to develop an encompassing sociology of translation; however, those methods can also be extensively used in the applied research in the field of Translation Studies including Translation Pedagogy and Translation Profession without opting for any one of sociological theories. What makes the above-mentioned socially-oriented research projects different from the studies which can be potentially conducted applying grounded theory methodology, however, is the ways the data are analyzed. The qualitative data analysis in sociologically oriented studies involves organizing and coding the data. Among the several approaches to coding qualitative data, namely thematic analysis, content analysis etc., grounded theory method has recently been quite popular one in social studies, especially when the purpose is to construct theoretical formulations, concepts, and models.

At the data analysis stage of a GT research works, what is very important is not whether the data have been elicited from the three methods applied in the previous stage of the research, but whether the data is being analyzed to derive quantitative or qualitative results. Normally the data collected in participant-oriented research by interview and focus group method are qualitative in nature; questionnaire data can be quantitative when the questions are of closed types or they can be qualitative when the questions are open questions. Much of the qualitative data in GT study can also be obtained from other means such as recording and transcriptions of TAPs, diaries, correspondences, and field notes, etc. The common denominator in these cases is that all data are verbal and the analysis is non- linguistic in the sense that the researcher does not need to analyze the data through the use of any linguistic knowledge or tools.

Despite its due complexity and vagueness, Grounded Theory Method focuses on interpersonal relationships and the actions of individuals in groups and larger social settings (Mey & Mruck, 2009). Due to its microsociological perspective, it has been widely applied in a variety of disciplines and in branches of social studies as well as the other fields of studies which may adopt a participant-oriented research such as Medical Sciences, Business, Political Sciences, and Management. However, the

methodology is not applied as widely in translation studies as it is in other disciplines. Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) have referred solely to Clifford (2004), Weber et al. (2005), and Torikai (2011), three scholars applying the grounded theory method in their research project in the field of community interpreting studies. This may be because of the short history of sociological approach to the study of translation, which itself is still in its infancy. Interestingly, however, the practice of translation has been considered an area of concern and an issue in its own right to maintain the integrity of a grounded theory study; in fact, the very act of translation is a procedure in carrying out the grounded theory method when collecting and analyzing the data (Narjannah et al, 2014). This is the case when data is collected in the native language of the participants and is intended to report in another different language. Narjannah and his colleagues have offered several four-step translation procedures for data analysis in grounded theory in cases where the study participants and researchers speak different languages or if the target language for publication is different from the source of data. In fact translation was used as a tool to do part of the data collection and data analysis, but not as an object of investigation on its own right. The transcriptions of the interviews and TAPs in this research are also translated because they were administered in the native language of the participants. It is also confirmed that "in both qualitative and quantitative research, the most important factor in achieving a valid translation is ensuring equivalence of meaning" (Sechrest, Fay, & Zaidi, 1972). The translation practice used in qualitative research becomes vitally important for researchers seeking to ensure conceptual equivalence (Chen & Boore, 2009).

Translation has also been as an instrument in the qualitative data analysis in different disciplines such as health sciences (see Oturu, 2011; Thulesius, 2009), education (Barnett, 2012; Stillman, 2011), and business studies (Johnston, 2009).

Despite the social nature of either doing of or learning of translation, the use of grounded theory methodology in research works done within translation studies is rare if not non-existing. A review of literature on product-oriented, process-oriented, and even participant-oriented translation research including the research on translation education, profession, and technology reveals that previous research in the field is mostly concerned with the deductive approach of testing existing theories; this does not mean that the issues involved in field of translation cannot be investigated through the qualitative research requiring grounded theory method for their data analysis, as the data collected in the research on communicative and social aspect of the translation can be well suited to carrying out grounded theory method (GTM). Some fields in the applied branch of the translation studies such as translation training, translation technology and profession where the researcher interacts with those being studied - the participants - are among the subjects the applicability and feasibility of GTM can be examined in order to go beyond mere description of the phenomenon under investigation to construct theoretical formulations. The outcome here could be theories, models as well as contextualized theoretical formulations.

Given the popularity of grounded theory methodology (GTM) in the social sciences, and due to its iterative research design and reconstructive interpretive procedures, it is assumed that the GTM would make it possible for the researcher to

reveal and represent patterns of understanding about how the translation trainees as participants in the research project experience and respond to the events that occur in the translation classroom, hence constructing a theoretical formulation representing participant's responses and interpretation of the social world, translation event, and meanings. Additionally, researchers seeking to apply grounded theory methodology (GTM) to their specific research projects often feel at loss as to how the methodology should be operationalized. GTM's complexity and vagueness, especially in coding process and concept assignment tend to discourage the users from applying the GTM approach in their research projects and, especially, in PhD theses. This paper serves the dual purpose of providing a precise and comprehensive review of the constitutive characteristics, assumptions, and requirements of GTM as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and, at the same time, discussing the application of the methodology in a qualitative research in translation education in the first two years of a doctoral study looking at the practical training needs of the translator trainees being prepared for real-life and market translation. As the vast literature on GTM often leaves scholars wondering how the method can be operationalized, this paper tends to provide a precise and comprehensive review of GTM, the Strauss and Corbin's version, discussing its application in research project on translator training in particular. Throughout the paper, the methodological discussion of data collection and eliciting, data processing and analysis, quality assessment, and the generalization of empirical findings are illustrated by a description of a research project on how translator competence can be developed in translation classes in university undergraduate level. Particular attention is paid to the implications of conducting GTM qualitative research in the field of translator training and education. Due attention is given to the issues of GTM's application as a method; how to use coding strategy; and what is the generated theory, and will provide the readers with know-how as well as the insights into how the question of developing translator competence can be explored this time through integration of a different method, i.e. GTM.

The paper attempts to bridge the gap of insufficient discussion in the literature, and focusing on new researchers' GT adopting experiences provides them with practical directions. In this respect it can be a response to the scarcity of grounded theories in the field of translation studies. Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasized that grounded theory methodology is intended to "improve the social scientists' capacity for generating theory that will be relevant to their research" (p. vii), and are understandable not only to sociologist but also to layman. Based on these perspectives, it is discernible that the use of grounded theory methodology will not only enrich literature on translation education but also produce theories that are understandable to teachers and learners and thus enable them to make sense of the theories and link them to their practice. In addition to that, the theories produced may also be useful in shaping the national policy relevant to learning and teaching translation. Therefore, the present paper's focus is on (1) establishing the need for grounded theory methodology in translation research by presenting a brief account of the research works with a social approach to translation education, (2) highlighting the important elements in grounded theory methodology, and (3) presenting useful resources to gain an in-depth understanding of grounded theory methodology. These

are achieved by first giving an overview of the GTM where the very nature and characteristics of the method are presented.

Overview of GTM

Grounded theory envisaged that the researcher interact with those being studied and strives to interpret their social world and meanings. (Hunter et al., 2011)

Grounded theory method is a systematic approach to theory development based on actual data collected rigorously through qualitative research. It is widely recognized that original theoretical underpinnings in GT were from pragmatics and symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Pickard, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Rooted in sociology, GT has spread to wider practitioner fields such as nursing, education, psychology, accounting, business management, public health, social work and library and information science over the last 40 years. The research project results in an “integrated theoretical formulation” giving insights into how “persons or organizations or communities experience and respond to events that occur” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 49). The events are interpreted through “the eyes of both participants and researchers”, thus the theory constructed through grounding it in data will be different from those classic speculative theories of positivist position in that the resultant theory tends to be more reflective of context, practical and social situation, and subjective statements about causal relationships between actors. Glaser and Strauss (1967) deliberately framed their method as a reaction to two major trends in research in the 1960s – namely, a tendency to formulate grand theories on the one hand and a disposition towards mere description on the other (Kuckartz, 2010; Mey & Mruck, 2009). To achieve this, GTM strove to develop empirically grounded middle-range theories by providing an unbiased and open approach.

There are different competing versions of the GTM built on the different epistemological and ontological positions the grounded theorists may take. Here, three versions of GTM are listed: Classic GTM of Glaser and Strauss (1967) representing GTM in its pure form derived from the original work of Glaser (1978). The second version is that of the Straussian GTM which is a modified approach trying to make GT more transparent, and Constructivist GTM that is a recent version remodeling the GT proposed by Charmaz (2006). In the present study, the researcher takes views of both Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Corbin and Holt (2005) that acknowledges “multiple realities” or multiple ways of interpreting particular sets of data accepting that theory is constructed or even co-constructed out of data in an interaction between the researcher and the people being studied by means of multiple analytic tools even, whereas Glaser (1998) holds an emergent view that implies “one reality” or “truth” embedded inherently in data from which the theory emerges.

Elements in Grounded Theory Methodology

Regardless of the debates between the Glaserian or Straussian philosophical perspectives and the existence of diverse versions of GT, there is hardly any doubt

that GT aims to “. . . generate core concepts and develop a theoretical framework that specifies their interrelationships” (Parker & Roffey, 1997, p. 222).

Through the review of the available literature (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Corbin & Holt, 2005) eight fundamental elements within grounded theory research were identified. The first five elements are ordered on the increasing levels of abstraction and the last three elements are those important components of theory development with which the discussion of GTM would be complete. The elements are:

- **Coding and identification of the concepts** – Initial coding is the first step of data analysis which begins with the first interview and observation. According to Corbin and Holt (2005), “*concepts are identified from distinct events / incidents in the data, which may be actions and interactions, or meanings given to the events or emotions that are expressed about certain events*” (p. 50). This involves identification of important words / group of words in the data before they are labeled accordingly. This early coding is referred to as “open coding” as the text is opened up and broken into units of analysis which can be anything from one line to a short paragraph. These units are then assigned conceptual categories based on both the data and the researcher’s conceptual knowledge. One interview or observation may yield any number of events which are coded as a particular concept. Corbin and Holt (2005) give a list of sources of qualitative data from which concept can be derived. These sources include “narrative interviews, documents, biographies, videos, photographs and combination of these” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 50). Transcriptions of the TAPs can be added to the list if the researcher involve in collecting and analyzing the qualitative data within translation studies. They hold that “gathering data on the same topic through a variety of means is a way of validating research findings through triangulation” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 50).
- **Making constant comparisons and asking questions** – Identification of relevant concepts according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) involves interaction with the data in which the analysis makes comparisons and asks questions. The notes taken in the context and texts of interviews are examined line by line or paragraph by paragraph while asking questions about the nature of the event and on what the data is about. The detailed line-by-line analysis is referred to as “microanalysis”. As the questions are answered, the events are given names and the analyst then moves to the next bit of data and compare it to the first one. If it pertains to the same idea previously expressed, it is given the same name. If they are not the same, the data is given another conceptual name being explored for further detail. Corbin and Holt (2005) put that to identify as many properties and dimensions as possible, variety of questions on who and what is involved, where and when, how it is expressed, what meanings are given and so on can possibly be posed. So this is the process in which the researcher constantly compares incident to incident, incident to codes, codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to categories until the properties and

dimensions which define a concept are established which in turn differentiate the concept from other ones. At this stage of interaction with data through comparison and asking questions, the sensitivity to the words of participant can be heightened.

- **Theoretical sensitivity** – The first level of theoretical sensitivity is personal as it reflects the researchers' insights into both themselves and the area of research whilst the second level reflects their "intellectual history, the type of theory that they have read, absorbed and now use in their everyday thought" (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 11). Corbin and Strauss (2008) also propose the criterion of sensitivity. Claiming that "objectivity in qualitative research is a myth" (p. 32), they suggest that researchers should not even try to create an objectivity that cannot be achieved. Instead, they should "deliberately immerse themselves in the research" and try to adopt the perspective of the research participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32).
- **Data reduction and categorization** – This is the next level of abstraction where the data are reduced in such a way that a set of data is represented by a manageable number of relevant categories, which are themselves concepts of more abstract types. Categorization of concepts is made using the same strategies as used for concept identification, i.e. by making comparison and asking questions to look for the similarities and differences between concepts. Axial coding aims to elaborate on the concepts and categories developed during open coding with the objective of establishing relationships between them (Kelle, 2011; Mey & Mruck, 2009; von Oertzen, 2006). As the transition from open to axial coding is fluent, the researcher can return to open coding and review codes and categories at any point in time (Mey & Mruck, 2009). This kind of comparison made can help these concepts be grouped around the commonalities. This process of "weaving the data back together around groups of concepts is known as 'axial coding'" (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 50). Axial coding is different from open coding; however, they both occur simultaneously during the analysis because every concept in the data has a connection to other bits of data and concepts, so it is not possible to select a concept from data without recognizing its connection to other concepts. Corbin and Holt (2005) put it in this way: "*Once a researcher has grouped concepts into categories, the data gathered earlier about each concepts become part of the properties and dimensions of what are now subcategories of a larger category*" (p. 50).

At this point there may be six or seven major categories subsuming several subcategories.

- **Synthesizing data and constructing core categories** – this involves further reduction of data by synthesizing them under more abstract concepts, called core concepts. This process is called "selective coding" because one must choose from among many possibilities the construct that is most representative. Selective coding comprises the identification of a core category and the elaboration of its relationships with all other categories through

constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kuckartz, 2010). Its connection with all the other categories means that the core category plays a central role in integrating, densifying, and saturating the theory. While the number of categories is reduced to a minimum in this process, special attention is paid to the properties and dimensions of the concepts in order to develop a “parsimonious but far-reaching theory” (Strauss, 1998, p. 66). “Core category is an integrative concept but detailed in the sense that it is explained through all of the information contained under individual categories and their properties and dimension” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 51). They add that conceptualization can be done differently by different researchers whose varied professional backgrounds and epistemological positions are the key factors in their putting the emphasis on data. The important thing for them “is not what conceptual names are applied to data, but that other researchers and critics are able to follow the analytic logic that led to the choice of concepts” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 51).

- **Theoretical sampling** is required when the researcher needs to get more information to saturate categories under development. It refers to data collection directed by emerging concepts. Corbin and Holt (2005) say “*The researcher follows the trail of concepts looking for sites, persons, or events that enable further comparisons of data, thereby extending knowledge about properties, dimensions and relationships between concepts*” (p.51).

Samples are identified based on their ability to give information-rich sources of data to meet the researcher’s analytical needs.

- **Memo writing** – Memos are the written records of a researcher’s thinking during the research process and memo writing helps the researcher to become more analytical and reflective. It is an important component because it enables the researchers “to keep track of the ever-evolving concepts and more complex ideas” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 51). Memo writing starts with the first analytic sessions and continues through the writing phase. It includes a recording of the researcher’s thought interpretations, and directions to self.
- **Theoretical saturation** – Saturation is said to occur when no new concepts or further properties or dimensions of existing concepts emerge from data, and there is no theoretical insights arising.

Several other considerations related to the characteristics and nature of GTM can be given to the type of data, the issue of literature review, sampling process, and the issue of translation in the whole process of applying GTM of any version.

Qualitative data refers to descriptive, non-numerical data in the form of written text, including field observations, interviews, and documents as well as images, video, and audio material that have been transcribed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

They are particularly suited to the analysis of meanings that people attribute to structures, processes, and events. Moreover, they are especially useful in exploratory studies and in the development of hypotheses (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data need to be collected in the local language of participants. A research team member who is fluent in the local language is the most appropriate person to interview participants. Such a decision will minimize the risk of misinterpretation and prevent the loss of participants' intended meanings when they use phrases and concepts which are securely embedded in the study's context (Smith et al., 2008).

Data may be translated at three distinct points in the research process: before analysis, during analysis, or after analysis when the manuscript is ready for publication (Suh et al., 2009). Suh et al. (2009) recommend that translation takes place during analysis because they believe that this will ensure the authenticity of the findings if the study is to be published in a different language. If data are translated before analysis, there is the possibility that meaning will be lost from the participant's implicit expression (Larkin et al., 2007).

As to the sampling process in GTM, the sampling strategy suggested by grounded theory methodology is called "theoretical sampling" and reflects the reiterative approach (this means that a first round of data collection should be followed by data analysis and a subsequent round of data collection based on the initial findings). This procedure leads to the theoretical sampling of interviews and contributes to the theoretical saturation of the concepts to data collection and analysis that is typical of GTM. Theoretical sampling is a circular process that is characterized and differentiated from other sampling procedures by the immediate analysis of the collected data. In an ideal case, the researcher starts the analysis right after collecting the first piece of data, develops preliminary concepts and subsequent questions, and continues the data collection with a specific focus on the concepts she is interested in. Hence, the researcher is not sampling re-search participants (i.e., people) but concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Because they were concerned with openness and un-biasedness towards the empirical phenomenon, the early founders of grounded theory methodology proposed that previous knowledge and literature should be largely ignored at the beginning of a new research project (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mey & Mruck, 2009). While this direction was historically justified, it lost its strength over time, and a dispute about the "correct" handling of previous knowledge led to the parting of Glaser and Strauss in the 1990s (Kelle, 2011). Subsequently, Strauss and his student Juliet Corbin developed an independent strand of GTM that continued to demand conceptual openness from the researcher. According to Kelle (2011), the development of empirically grounded theories should always be guided by an adequate epistemological model that relates data to theory. Yet the reference to literature and previous knowledge in the data analysis entail the risk of constricting the analysis and predetermining the re-search outcome (Kruse, 2010).

The codes which are identified at the open coding stage can be grouped under four labels of “In-vivo code” which means that a code is directly mentioned by the participant; “Priori code” means that the code has been similarly presented in certain literature. The researcher had realized its existence; “Question addressed” means the code raises new research questions and hypotheses; and “New idea” means that the code is emergent as an original concept.

Review of Literature in GTM

To provide the an account of the GTM as mentioned in the methodology section some of the classic and useful sources that are used to gain an in-depth understanding of grounded theory methodology are presented in this part. The recommendation made in this section is based on the first author’s personal experiences of attempting to employ Strauss and Corbin version of grounded theory in her PhD study. Since many researchers have remodelled the grounded theory (see Holt, 2008; Charmaz, 2006), it is suggested that “neophyte” researchers start by reading *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* written by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This is important to avoid confusion and misconception as many researchers choose to “adapt and adopt” this methodology and often violate the methodological rigor of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992). It is admitted by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) that reading this book clears one’s misconception of grounded theory.

Another useful source that was read is *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussion* by Glaser (1998). In this book, Glaser tackles the various issues raised by other researchers such as the conflict of philosophical underpinnings of grounded theory, and the function of literature review in grounded theory. In addition to that, Glaser also provides a practical guide to doing grounded theory in this book. It was also necessary and useful to read *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* by Glaser (1978) to gain insights on how to monitor theoretical sensitivity in the attempt of developing the theory. The most useful one for the researcher was Strauss and Corbin (1990). This is the book that offers an approach representing the first split from classic GTM. It offers a modified approach aiming at making GTM more transparent to researchers. Charmaz (2006) is the most remodelled version of GTM where the author takes a social constructivist position in her model.

In addition to the three books, *The Grounded Theory Review* which is an open access journal published by the Grounded Theory Institute was also useful to take a look at the examples of grounded theories as well as discussion of current issues surrounding this methodology. Besides, there is much valuable information about grounded theory on the Grounded Theory Institute website which can be accessed at <http://www.groundedtheory.com/>.

Methodology

This study is partly a library research in its classical sense, where the data is collected through the study and review of the related literature and some bible works on GTM

to provide an overview of the GTM and the related issues. To examine its feasibility and applicability in the field of teaching and learning translation in university classes; however, GTM as a methodology was applied on a doctoral study on modeling the development of translator competence, which is an inductive and empirical research. The study did not seek to verify a pre-defined hypothesis; instead, it is set out to develop inductively a model for developing translator competence grounded in data. This is achieved through adopting and applying Strauss and Corbin's version of GTM. The planned research itself is a field study conducted in the classroom situation, and aims at exploring the issue through semi-structured interviews, observation of the classroom activities, and conducting a questionnaire with open-end questions and transcriptions made of students' TAPs. Strauss and Corbin (1990) version of GTM has been used by the researcher.

Sampling Strategy

The statistical population of the planned research consists of the undergraduate students in translator training course, who were admitted to the University College of Nabi Akarm in 1392, 1393, and 1394; they are 33, 44, and 23 students male and female, respectively. Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously when each group of students was passing the Simple Prose Translation course and Advanced Translation 1 and 2 in three successive semesters. The data were analyzed and coded based on coding system in Strauss and Corbin GTM version (2008). However, as is the nature of GTM, the researcher was not sampling research participants (i.e., people), but the concepts elicited by students as theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) so there were 726, 968, and 506 data units respectively elicited from each group of participants answering individually the 22 questions posed in the process of data collection. This theoretical sampling continued until data saturation is reached, meaning that all categories were sufficiently developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. Students were grouped according to their year of admission in university and the course they were studying at the time of investigation. Then each group was investigated by means of semi-structured interviews administered in the native language of the interviewees and researcher made questionnaire with open questions about their experiences of the state of their training and their training needs and the relationship this had to the professional translation practice. The questions were in either the native or in some occasion in Persian, the formal language of the participants. Both instances were translated into English conceptually.

Data Collection and Analysis: Coding Process

Grounding the theory in data is managed through simultaneous data collection and analysis in GTM. The first predominant task is for the researcher to immerse him- or herself in the data, which is mainly done using initial / open coding. Open coding focuses on breaking up, investigating, conceptualizing, and categorizing the data (Kuckartz, 2010) through the constant comparison of statements and with a focus on the properties and dimensions of the concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss, 1987).

During this initial phase it is essential that the researcher remain open-minded and willing to be surprised by the diversity of data she gathers. In the model of translator competence study, the researcher initially read the answers and advanced line by line, asking herself questions about the meaning, conditions, causes, objectives, and results of the development process in translating and about alternatives to it, and then drawing comparisons to similar incidents. This enabled her to understand how the interviewees developed their arguments and also to engage with the logic of their narratives. After coding each interview, she identified the categories that seemed central to the respective interviewee's arguments about (1) the meaning of the translation task itself and translator competence and (2) his or her role, preparedness, and participation in the learning event. She was thus able to quickly identify recurrent themes and relevant categories that could be elaborated on in the next step of data analysis. Over time, relationships between codes started to emerge and more conceptual work on individual codes were initiated; meanwhile, other codes remained at a preliminary stage and new codes were still in the making. Hence, the coding process was characterized by the movement back and forth between interviews and the elaboration of codes and categories at various levels of analysis. The second predominant task of coding is the constant comparison of categories, concepts, and empirical incidents. This is mainly done using axial and selective coding. Axial / intermediate coding aims to elaborate on the concepts and categories developed during open coding with the objective of establishing the relationships between them (Kelle, 2011; Mey & Mruck, 2009; von Oertzen, 2006). As the transition from open to axial coding is fluent, the researcher was able to return to open coding and review codes and categories at any point in time (Mey & Mruck, 2009). In this study, open coding led to the development of some broad categories entitled reflection, cooperation, and translation activities and learning dynamics that comprised a large number of lower-level concepts. During the intermediate / axial coding the researcher developed these concepts and the relationships between them by constantly comparing the empirical incidents. The analytical tools of posing questions and drawing comparisons led to the further development of concepts and categories. These then guided the theoretical sampling and analysis of the next interview (Strauss, 1998). To advance the theoretical integration of the interpretive work i.e., the main purpose of selective coding, the researcher then focused her attention on a limited number of core categories. Selective coding comprises the identification of a core category and the elaboration of its relationships with all other categories through constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Kuckartz, 2010). Its connection with all the other categories means that the core category plays a central role in integrating, and saturating the theory. While the number of categories is reduced to a minimum in this process, special attention is paid to the properties and dimensions of the concepts in order to develop a "parsimonious" but far-reaching theory (Strauss 1998, p. 66). From the very beginning the researcher drafted coding notes for each interview as well as analytical memos about individual concepts and their relationships with other concepts, in most cases in Persian. This procedure produced a large amount of written material; however, it also raised the analysis to a more conceptual level and facilitated the elaboration of categories and their relationships (cf. Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 120). Below is an example of open coding where the interviewees' responses collected

through the interviews and transcription of the TAPs in translating class where only four data units are included. These statements made by the informants in the planned study in response to two open-end questions of: 1) What do you normally do at first step when you are to translate a text? 2) What do you think of team and in-group work in translation classroom and how team work will be useful in translation practice? Some of the answers given were coded as shown in table one.

Table 1. An Example of Open Coding in the Translator Competence Study

Quotations; Units	Initial codes	Category	Type of Codes
"I normally do an enquiry into the subject of the text, then assign the translation purpose, study few original text in target lg. on the same subject to decide on the lexical equivalence." (Farnaz)	Subject identification: Reading	Sub-competence:	Priori code
	Purpose specification	Sub-competence	Question raised
	Use of original texts in target lg.	Sub-competence: Instrumental	New idea
	Deciding on lexical equivalence	Strategic competence	Priori code
"The important point is to have relevant background knowledge on the subject matter of the text being translated." (Shafiqeh)	Acquiring background knowledge	Translator schemata	Question raised
"Working in teams of three students to share the group experience help to have fluent translation." (Negin)	Teaming up with other members	Cooperative translating	Question raised
	Sharing experience	Collaborative learning/translating	Priori coding
"Reaching an agreement on the final translation and making a single decision on lexical equivalence." (Mehdi)	Reaching consensus	Reflection on their practice	New idea
	Making unanimous decision	Managing the task	New idea

In table 1, the author of this paper provided an example of the method she developed out of the guidelines suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990) in order to present, relate, and integrate the categories transcribed and translated from the interviews she made. The author excluded the "conditional matrix technique" of Strauss and Corbin in axial coding system, because she found them very abstract to interpret the constructed categories. Those techniques can be very useful to interpret the emergent categories in the emergent version of GTM.

Findings

Based on the categorizations made in this study, 220 codes were classified into 55 concepts and 33 main categories. The data analysis procedure led to the creation of a theoretical model which includes the trainees' reflection conditions, their cooperation conditions, their in-class strategies, and activities that describe the main issue of model of translator competence development. The model provides a useful guide to assist the teachers teaching translation courses at university level to enhance the class activities.

Conclusion – The Applicability of Grounded Theory Methodology

GTM represents an interesting approach to qualitative research; its comprehensiveness and flexibility allow GTM to offer a variety of instruments and procedures that enable researchers to use it in the most diverse projects especially in PhD dissertations. However, its methodological freedom requires that the researcher explicate her approach and critically reflect upon the objectives, procedures, and results of her study. Simply stating that a study is “based on grounded theory methodology” is not sufficient; the researcher needs to comply with the methodological rigors it requires. One of the constitutive elements of GMT is the fact that it is non-linear, and this circular process requires the researcher to alternate between the collection and the analysis of empirical data to construct the categories. GTM also requires a long time to be accomplished and although is a time-consuming methodology because it is based on an iterative design, and theoretical sampling, it is precisely the constitutive elements of GTM that improve its applicability. This paper led to the provision of a framework which assist novice researchers visualize the iterative process inherent in a GT study. In this study, the researcher focused on how the students in the translation class constructed their meaning of translation practice while co-constructing her experience and meanings with the students to provide a model for developing translator competence. In so doing, the relevant tools e.g. coding, categorizing and integrating, theoretical memos etc. allowed for the modification of theoretical concepts based on empirical findings. In this sense, GTM is particularly adequate for application in the contexts and cultures of translation education as well, where there is still a need for the development of theoretical concepts.

Practical Implications – The paper provides practical suggestions of what matters when adopting GT approach. It needs more new researchers to further confirm the suggestions that the author stated in terms of a researcher’s experience.

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Authors' Biographies



Mehrangiz Anvarhaghighi is a lecturer in the Department of English Translation and Linguistics at University College of Nabi Akram, Tabriz, Iran. She is the Head of the Department, at present. She is a PhD Student of Translation Studies at Allameh Tabataba'i University. She authored several articles in international and national journals, and has presented several papers in international scientific conferences at University of Liverpool, Sydney, Kyoto, Syddansk (Denmark), and British Columbia, Canada. Completion and participation in international institutes and summer schools held specifically for PhD students are among her academic achievements. The courses were on "Resourcing Researchers and Tooling Teachers" at Macquarie University, Australia, and Theoretical Approaches to TS, Research Methods, Research Design & Dynamics in Translation Studies held by Translation Research Summer School, TRSS at Manchester University taught and coordinated by Mona Baker and Theo Hermans. She is a member of International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies, and of the Systemic Functional Linguistics Typology Group in Sydney. Her research interests are in the areas of Translation Pedagogy, Sociology of Translation, Models of Translation, and Translation Criticism.



Farzaneh Farahzad is a Full Professor of English Translation Studies in Faculty of English Translation, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. She is a member of International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies. Dr. Farahzad is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Iranian Journal of Translation Studies*, and is on the editorial board of *Journal of Language and Translation*. She is the author of several textbooks compiled for Translator Training Program in Iran and of many articles in international as well as national journals and conferences. She has supervised fourteen doctoral dissertations since 2015. She has recently co-edited a volume on "Translating Women: Different Voices and New Horizons" and has published it in Routledge Publishing Company, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group. Her co-editor is Luis von Flotow, a distinguished scholar and researcher in the field. Prior to the publication of this volume, she also authored, translated, and edited several books in Translation Studies. Her research interests are in the areas of Translation Training, Women Studies and Translation, and Translation Evaluation.



Hossein Mollanazar is an Associate Professor at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, Iran. He did a PhD in Translation Studies at the University of Warwick, UK, 2001. He was the Head of Research Institute in 2012, and the Head of Translation Studies Center of Excellence. Currently he is the Head of English Translation Department for English Translation Studies at Allameh Tabataba'i University where he has taught Graduate Courses and has supervised several Doctoral Dissertations on Translation. He has compiled seventeen books and translated eight books on different issues concerning Translation. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Translation Studies* and is the author of many papers published in international and national Journals. His research interests are Sociology of Translation, Translation Technology, and Translation and Cultural Studies.
