

Contextualising translation expertise

Lived practice and social construction

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Translation expertise has been discussed intensely in (cognitive) translation studies. Most research has been conducted in laboratory settings, attempting to discern the differences between experienced translators ('experts') and lesser experienced translators. This has resulted in valuable, yet limited insights. We argue for the need to complement the picture with a broader perspective on translation expertise and to further investigate it in its authentic dynamic contexts, be they workplaces or other fields of practice. This implies seeing expertise as situated and performative, emerging from the interaction of social actors with their social and material environments. Emphasis is placed on the social, discursive construction of expertise and on the emic perspectives of the community being studied.

Keywords: translation expertise, translation competence, social construction, situatedness, lived expertise

1. Introduction

The notion of translation expertise has been a topic of interest to translation studies (TS) scholars for several decades. Over the past 20 years, intense efforts particularly within the field of translation process research (TPR) have produced valuable insights into the skills required of translators. Most of the empirical research to date has been conducted in laboratory settings and seeks, for example, to examine cognitive differences between translators with different levels of experience (e.g., 'translation experts', 'semi-professional translators' or 'novices'). Theoretical conceptualisations have been inspired primarily by expertise studies in cognitive psychology. In this paper, we argue for the need to contextualise translation expertise, i.e., to integrate it into relevant and meaningful situations of practice and experience. Contextualisation in the sense intended in this article refers to the integration of knowledge and activities in their natural or usual settings,

such as actors' lives or workplaces (e.g., by observing how they carry out projects and solve real-life problems using the authentic materials and instruments encountered therein), including any relevant social roles and networks. In the case of translation expertise, it means extending the concept to include a performative, situated perspective and exploring its significance in authentic, complex and dynamic translation settings. This, in turn, also enables us to place a particular focus on the critical aspect of the social, discursive construction of expertise and experts.

2. What makes a good translator? Translation expertise in the lab

In 1984, Holz-Mänttari described translation as an action realised by an expert (*Expertenhandeln*, Holz-Mänttari 1984). Since then, and indeed even earlier, there has been an ongoing discussion in the TS field about whether every bilingual or multilingual individual can actually translate or interpret. Most TS scholars have suggested that additional skills are required and that a person needs certain translation *competence* or *expertise* in order to work *professionally* as a translator. Accordingly, theoretical and empirical research has largely centred on the aspects that make up such competence, expertise or professionalism. These three terms have frequently been used interchangeably, which has also led to discussions about their similarities and differences.

Some recent publications call for conceptual clarity and distinctions between these concepts. Several TPR studies have shown that professionals do not always produce high-quality translations, which is why Jääskeläinen (2010) suggests distinguishing between *professional translators* (who earn their living from translating) and *expert translators* (with high quality performance). Shreve et al. (2018) discuss the “awkward co-existence” of *competence* and *expertise* in translation studies. For them, the “virtual identity in usage of the two concepts” leads to “an unfortunate muddying of the conceptual waters” (2018, 49). They question whether the linguistically oriented concept of competence is still useful and propose working instead with the expertise framework from cognitive psychology (2018, 52).

The term *competence* long dominated in discussions about the skills required for translation work. Initial research in the 1970s and 1980s focused mainly on linguistic skills. Many different definitions and models have since followed and progressively included an increasing number of factors beyond language (for an overview see, for example, Massey 2017; Hurtado Albir 2021; Yang & Li 2021). These increasingly comprehensive models were often motivated by pedagogics and, according to their critics, became less conclusive with increasing scope: “The

conceptual boundaries of translation competence have had a tendency to balloon, including more and more elements, until we have a situation where ‘competence’ may have become theoretically weak” (Shreve et al. 2018, 38; see also Pym 2003). Pym (2003) and Malmkjær (2009) put forward opposing models with minimal definitions of translation competence which were limited to two or three capabilities. Both of these and some of their multicomponent counterparts (e.g., Risku 1998; PACTE Group 2011) emphasise the process-like character of competence – the “doing” and “experiencing” – and demonstrate strong similarities to the performance-based approach used in cognitive-psychological *expertise* research.

The cognitive-psychological approach to studying expertise evolved from research on exceptionally good performance and performers in domains such as sports or chess and focuses mainly on problem solving and speed. According to Shreve et al. (2018), its more robust theoretical and empirical foundations afford it a number of advantages over the concept of competence, and the expertise framework now forms the basis of several TPR approaches.

In the expertise performance approach, an expert is often defined as someone who displays “consistently superior performance on a specified set of representative tasks for the domain” (Ericsson & Charness 1994, 731). Expertise, i.e., the “entire set of cognitive resources and abilities that allows consistently reproducible expert performance” (Shreve 2002, 151), is described as something that is acquired over time as opposed to being an innate characteristic. The learning process is thus central to expertise, and while experience also plays a major role, this applies only for the type that is characterised by *deliberate practice*, a key concept in expertise studies, which was coined by Ericsson et al. (1993) and adopted in translation studies by Shreve (2006). This “regular engagement in specific activities directed at performance enhancement in a particular domain” (Shreve 2006, 29) is assumed to be what makes the difference between experts and “experienced non-experts” (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1993, 11; see also Sirén & Hakkarainen 2002, 75–76; Jääskeläinen 2010, 218) and would explain why experienced working professionals do not always produce high-quality translations (Jääskeläinen 2010). Accordingly, not all experienced translators are expert translators – only those who have engaged in *deliberate practice*.

Much of the empirical research on translation expertise has, however, used experience as the main criterion for the selection of study participants. The corresponding studies observe and compare the actions and resulting translations of translators with different levels of experience such as translation experts, semi-professional translators, novices or students. In this view, experts are not necessarily top performers but rather the “more knowledgeable group” (Chi 2006, 22). Their expertise is thus “relative”, whereas the study of “absolute expertise” would

focus on truly exceptional performers and measurable peak performances (Chi 2006, 21–23). But since absolute experts are difficult to identify in the field of translation, it is only logical that empirical research to date has focused on relative expertise. While this allows researchers greater freedom in the choice of participants (Jääskeläinen 2010, 217–218), it is also problematic from a theory perspective (see, e.g., Muñoz Martín 2014, 9) and, in essence, contradicts the claim that not all experienced translators are experts.

Nevertheless, studies comparing novices to more experienced translators have served to identify a number of indicators that characterise the differences in their performance. Such studies are conducted in experimental, controlled settings, mainly using data acquisition methods such as think-aloud protocols, eye-tracking, keystroke logging or screen logging. They have shown, for example, that more experienced translators process larger sections of text, use more reference material and exhibit higher degrees of automation, task awareness, target-text and context orientation, self-monitoring and self-evaluation than their novice counterparts (for an overview, see da Silva 2021, 468–470).

However, these aspects offer merely a brief indication of what translation expertise can mean. This fact is highlighted, for example, by Muñoz Martín (2014), who adopts a situated cognition perspective and suggests a multidimensional construct of translation expertise, which consists of general and task-specific dimensions of expertise and aims to describe the nature of translation as a multidimensional, situation-dependent activity. With his reconceptualisation, which emphasises the situated, embodied nature of cognition, Muñoz Martín takes a step towards embedding the expertise construct in a complex, dynamic, situative and context-specific working reality of translators. He underlines the importance of the increased focus on adaptability: while expertise research traditionally assumes that expertise is limited to a particular domain and is not transferable, adaptability or adaptive expertise takes on a key role in the wide-ranging, dynamic fields of activity that come into play in the translation sector (see also Tiselius & Hild 2017, 430; Angelone & Marín García 2019; Muñoz Martín & González Fernández 2021). Translation expertise could thus be regarded as the “maximal adaptation to task constraints” (Muñoz Martín 2014, 10). Following this line of reasoning, one could assume that expertise research should also be conducted in authentic (workplace) settings, as laboratory or classroom experiments have difficulties incorporating “the situated, embedded and embodied nature of translation and interpreting in real-world workplaces” (Risku et al. 2020, 50). However, for Muñoz Martín – and similarly for Ericsson (2000) with regard to interpreting – the postulate regarding the measurability of classical expertise research, and thus the preference for research conducted under controlled laboratory conditions, still seems to persist.

Experimental research designs require both the identification of well-defined tasks that are representative of translation activities and the measurement of the performance of translators who execute such tasks. But is this even possible? It can be argued that translation is by default ill-defined (Muñoz Martín 2014, 23; Sirén & Hakkarainen 2002). Additionally, workplace studies (e.g., Risku et al. 2019a) have shown that heterogeneity has increased due to the drastic changes in translation work environments and tasks in recent years. Technological developments and a globalised network economy have led to a diversification of tasks, tools, work processes and cooperation forms. In view of this complexity, Alves and da Silva (2021, 2022) conclude not only that “a great deal of adaptive expertise” (2022, 154) is needed but also that it is “implausible to come up with external ranking criteria to define outstanding performance” (2022, 154) and even “defining expertise in translation i[s] an impossible endeavor from the perspective of a profession or a task” (2022, 155).

To resolve the issue, Alves and da Silva (2022, 156) suggest “approach[ing] translation not as an occupation, profession, activity, task or technique, but rather as a complex skill that is an integral part of several domains”. They attempt to narrow down the scope of expertise research in TPR by focusing on a specific translation skill that can be defined and measured more easily within specific translation domains and modalities. This endeavour bears some similarities to minimalist definitions of translation competence such as those put forward by Pym or Malmkjær (see above) but differs in that it is based on theoretical and empirical advances in expertise research acquired in the meantime (Alves & da Silva 2022, 159). The translation skill comes into play in different phases or sub-tasks of translation processes which, in turn, can be part of different professions or activities. Its (tentative) definition as the “self-monitoring power of rendering a target-language written text material that is said, or expected, to be ‘equivalent’ to the source-language text” (Alves & da Silva 2022, 156) has both advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, it successfully narrows down the conceptual scope. On the other, it returns to the notion of *equivalence*, which has been problematised in TS for decades, and it delimitates the description to “written text material” only. Thus, it might reduce the complexity, diversity and modality of translating to an unnecessary extent.

Alves and da Silva do, however, embed this translation skill in an interplay with other skills needed for translating. To investigate this interplay, they suggest applying a “sociological construct of ‘interactional expertise’” (Alves & da Silva 2022, 161), based on a proposal by Collins and Evans (2007; see also Collins & Evans 2018), which puts language at the core of expertise or *specialist tacit knowledge* (Collins & Evans 2007, 14). In this view, translation expertise mostly consists of domain-specific “discourse fluency” (Alves & da Silva 2021, 101), which is

acquired by socialisation processes within groups of experts in the given domain. According to Alves and da Silva, there are several advantages to the notion of interactional expertise: it is compatible with a situated, distributed, extended (SDE)¹ view on translation and cognition but at the same time sees expertise as absolute and thus measurable. Accordingly, it could provide common ground for the different research traditions in TPR and cognitive translation studies (CTS). Furthermore, Alves and da Silva (2021, 94) consider it suitable for research both in laboratory settings and authentic contexts. Last but not least, they feel that this interactional expertise approach provides more opportunities for interdisciplinary work and for contributing to other disciplines and expertise research. In the long run, their aim is to build a framework that integrates it with the established expertise performance approach (Alves & da Silva 2021, 102).

We appreciate these recent developments in conceptualising translation expertise as they clear up many of the previous contradictions, attempt to integrate the notion of expertise in a situated, contextualised understanding of translation, further a dialogue between different strands in translation studies and open up to sociological perspectives. However, they adhere to a view of expertise as being absolute and measurable and thus endorse a quantifying approach. To approach translation expertise from a situated and contextualised perspective, we argue that further research is needed in authentic contexts, based on a qualitative rationale, in line with the bulk of workplace research that has been done in TS so far.

3. From the lab to the field: Expertise research in authentic contexts

Research that draws on authentic workplace settings is not yet a firmly established tradition in translation and interpreting studies, although it has gained considerable ground in recent years, especially in sociological and cognitive translation research (for a theoretical overview and examples of workplace research in TS, see Risku et al. 2019b; Risku et al. 2020; Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey 2019). In CTS, workplace studies are often based on a situated, 4EA approach to cogni-

1. Readers familiar with the 4EA approach to cognition (embodied, embedded, extended, enacted and affective) might wonder why Alves and da Silva (2021, 2022) choose the term SDE (situated, distributed and extended) instead of 4EA. An explanation can be found in a different text (Alves & Jakobsen 2021, 550): “We suggest that several of the labels used to describe 4EA cognition (embodied, embedded, extended, enacted and affective) as well as situated and distributed cognition are somewhat redundant for CTS. To avoid the many terminological overlaps among these various construals and approaches, we propose an account in terms of only situated, distributed and extended (SDE) approaches to translation and cognition.”

tion that understands cognition as a dynamic interaction between brain, body, material environment and social context. A key aspect of workplace research is that single texts, individual translators or isolated processes are replaced as units of analysis by projects, networks and activities in real-life workplaces – be they the home offices of freelance translators, language service agencies, in-house translation departments in companies and public service institutions or virtual translation networks. This enables researchers to investigate the day-to-day, context-related and situated work of translators with all their various tasks, interactions and working conditions. In order to grasp as many relevant aspects as possible, workplace research is often ethnographically oriented. Entering the workplace and being *immersed* in the field enables the researcher to approximate the *emic* (insider) view and observe a phenomenon in its authentic social setting. Participant observations, interviews and artefact/document analysis are among the most common methods. However, approaches that are quantitative or more distant from the field, such as questionnaires, are also possible (see Angelone & Marín García 2019). In addition, ethnographic methods can be combined with traditional TPR methods such as keystroke or screen logging, eye-tracking or even laboratory experiments for triangulation of data (see Ehrensberger-Dow 2014; Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey 2019).

The language industry of today is “in an unprecedented state of flux” (Angelone 2022, 60) and “characterized by constant growth and complexity” (Schäffner 2020, 63). Globalisation, technologization and the network economy are constantly restructuring translation work, leading to an increasing heterogeneity of tasks, work processes, cooperation forms and tools used (see, e.g., Schäffner 2020; Firat 2021; Angelone 2022). It has been argued that these manifold dynamics of *lived* translation work can be revealed to a greater extent by research in authentic settings than by that conducted under controlled laboratory or classroom conditions (Risku et al. 2020). Thus, a contextualised perspective on translation expertise calls for a decidedly different framework than the experimental settings that have so far primarily been used in TPR to study expertise. But while current key topics in TS workplace research include work organisation and routines, cooperation and social dynamics, cognitive, organisational and physical ergonomics, and the use and implications of (collaborative) technologies (see Risku et al. 2020), studies on lived translation expertise are few and far between, especially when compared to the wealth of experiment-based studies on translation competence/expertise. Angelone and Marín García (2019, 126–127) and Tiselius and Hild (2017, 429–430) recognise this research deficit and emphasise the need for sociological and ethnographic studies conducted in ecologically valid contexts. These would accommodate not only a situated, interactional under-

standing of expertise but also allow scope for the emic understanding of translation expertise.

Interestingly, the few studies that have been carried out in this area by translation and interpreting studies (TIS) scholars reveal a somewhat different picture to the one suggested by theoretical or experimental expertise research. In interpreting studies (IS), for instance, the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted by Albl-Mikasa (2013) and the in-depth interviews carried out by Tiselius (2013) with professional interpreters suggest that deliberate practice is not as important a factor in their acquisition of expertise as had previously been assumed. Similar results are also obtained in the only TS survey to date that focuses on this specific topic. Conducted by Angelone and Marín García (2019), the results of this survey of professional translators and project managers indicates that little importance is attached to deliberate practice in the acquisition of translation expertise, particularly given the general lack of suitable conditions to support this in the workplace. Several other differences are also apparent between the etic conceptualisation of expertise within the TPR community and the emic understanding in the working world. For example, the translators and project managers who participated in the aforementioned survey focus more strongly on handling matters relating to the work context and parameters (e.g., punctuality, interaction, dialogue) than on the quality of the work or even top performance. They consider (quantitative) productivity to be at least as important as quality (in the sense of a high-value, well-functioning product). By contrast, internal processes, which are regarded as classical indicators for expertise (e.g., increased automation, target text orientation, metacognitive regulation, etc.), are not reflected in the survey responses. Furthermore, the study shows the high importance of adaptability on a variety of levels. The activities the translators are engaged in are numerous and diverse. Not only do they sometimes translate outside their areas of specialisation, they also view their job as more than translating, i.e., also including proofreading, editing, localisation, etc. They have to adapt to different kinds of media, clients and their particular expectations as well as other situational constraints (Angelone & Marín García 2019, 136–137; see also Muñoz Martín 2014).

These results are not only compatible with the paradigm of situated cognition, they also hint at the potential of field research on translation expertise. Firstly, Angelone and Marín García's study (2019) reveals a remarkable difference between the definitions of expertise used in TS research and those used by working professionals in the language industry. Thus, their initial investigation demonstrates that adopting the lived work perspective offers strong potential for gaining new insights. Secondly, there is the question of the importance of understanding expertise also (and above all) as a social construction. The different perspectives

on this that are held in the academic and working worlds, but also the differences within the working world, show that expertise is not a stable, universal category. While some of the views expressed by the project managers and translators surveyed by Angelone and Marín García (2019) partly correspond, others are completely different. In other words, expertise can mean something different for each individual. This calls for an examination of the socio-cognitive factors that bring about the different conceptions. Thirdly, it becomes apparent that translation as work or as a task must be perceived as a complex and dynamic collaborative activity involving several people with different ideas and expectations. Translators not only carry out a number of different activities that relate directly to the text, they also spend a significant portion of their time on social, technological and administrative tasks (see also Angelone et al. 2020; Massey et al. 2022). Further research is needed to investigate how these social and environmental interactions shape – and are shaped by – actors’ conceptions of translation expertise.

Other recent workplace studies that offer promising prospects for the examination of lived expertise include Duflou’s (2016) study on EU conference interpreters and Olohan’s (2019) study conducted in the translation department of a research organisation. Both are ethnographically oriented and observe day-to-day working practices from within the field. They do not deal with expertise in the stricter sense but draw on the *community of practice* approach (Duflou 2016) and a *practice theory* reconceptualisation of knowledge as *knowing-in-practice* (Olohan 2019). Duflou (2016, 21) explicitly states that she prefers a broad notion of competence over that of expertise and makes clear “that this is not an investigation into exceptional, superior performance skills, but into the ability to perform professional tasks adequately”. However, the bulk of the expertise debate in TS revolves around precisely this ability – far more than exceptional, superior performance, which seems very elusive in the translation context. Both Duflou’s (2016) and Olohan’s (2019) approaches focus on very tangible practices, e.g., the day-to-day interaction with colleagues, computers and the physical workplace environment. This includes “seem[ingly] mundane detail[s]” (Duflou 2016, 235), such as turn-taking in the interpreting booth (Duflou 2016, 234–286) or using keystroke combinations for interacting with the TM software (Olohan 2019, 174–175). They show that the ability to navigate through everyday working life is situated, embodied, material, interactional and personal, thus tying in well with 4EA approaches to cognition.

4. Another dimension of context: Expertise as a social construction

Extending the context not only to workplace settings, but even further to societal dimensions, shifts the focus to expertise as a social function and social construction. As Mieg and Evetts (2018, 127) put it: “From a social perspective, the ‘expert’ is an ascription. [...] The criteria for considering someone an ‘expert’ vary, from qualifications [...], proven experience [...], or demonstrated performance [...] to roles within an organization.” Although expertise and professionalism are not considered synonymous, the concepts are tightly connected: professionalism is seen as an organisational form by which expertise is institutionalised. By defining expertise criteria, “professions as epistemic communities” (Mieg & Evetts 2018, 132) engage in a “discourse of occupational control” (Evetts et al. 2006, 110) and strive towards market closure. Monopolising an area of work can benefit the interests of both the professional group (in terms of status or salary) and the general public, by standardising and improving the quality of the services (Mieg & Evetts 2018, 130).

The view of expertise as something that is attributed to someone rather than possessed by someone offers a fresh perspective for research on translation expertise. It is different from the expert performance approach employed in TPR in that expertise here is not absolute but very relative – “relative to the performance criteria applied in a particular context” (Mieg 2006, 746). This means that “[a]lmost anyone can – under certain circumstances – act as an expert” (Mieg 2006, 745).² It can be sufficient if a person considers another person to be more knowledgeable or skilled in a specific area and turns to them for help or advice (Mieg 2006, 745). To apply this to an example from the world of translation: if you do not understand Vietnamese but know someone who does and ask that person if they could translate a short text for you, in that situation they fulfil the function of a translation expert for Vietnamese, even if they are ‘just’ bilingual and might not be seen as an expert by the translator community or by translation researchers. To sum up, what is seen as expertise and who is considered an expert is embedded in a given situation, in a specific context with its social and material conditions. Thus, from a socio-cognitive viewpoint, expertise is necessarily “expertise in context” (Feltovich et al. 1997).

In their study on skills required by translation graduates for employment, Hao and Pym (2021, 159) report on a very similar observation: “[I]t very much

2. However, Collins and Evans (2018) emphasise that defining expertise through attribution has its limits, as it might legitimise problematic viewpoints by anyone – contrary to scientific consensus. They prefer to see it as a “property” that can be “wrongly denied or wrongly attributed” (2018, 23).

depends on who you ask: there is a problem of subjective positionality.” The matter of subjective positionality is not limited to employers, clients, recipients or practitioners; it extends to translation trainers and researchers as well.³ So far, translation expertise research has mainly dealt with the views of the latter – etic constructions within academia. From a constructivist angle, these are not necessarily truer than those of the emic community. Thus, paying more attention to emic expertise constructs can provide new perspectives and enrich the scholarly discussion. Complementary to quantitative survey-based studies that have been conducted on the subject area of expertise, competence and skills (e.g., Angelone & Marín García 2019; Horbačauskienė et al. 2017; Hao & Pym 2021), qualitative studies (see, e.g., En & En 2019; Risku & Schlager 2022) can be particularly fruitful as they give the participants more room to express their ideas. Methods like “[s]emi- or unstructured interviews (and focus groups) tend to shift the balance of power away from the researcher and towards the participants, allowing for the co-construction of knowledge” (Saldanha & O’Brien 2014, 173).

Against this backdrop, it appears unnecessary to initially follow recent endeavours in translation studies to differentiate between expertise and competence in detail. Their conceptual differences are undoubtedly important in some contexts; however, the academic debate about these concepts does not necessarily reflect the way they are understood and used outside academia. Thus, if we want to give more weight to emic voices in empirical studies, it makes sense to minimise the controlling influence of etic conceptualisations put forward by scholars. In the context of this paper, we use the term *expertise* which is also used by most of the sources that we refer to; however, this does not mean that we see it as something completely different from or incompatible with *competence*. Ultimately, we consider the ideas and questions behind the terms to be more important than the terms themselves.

We do, however, want to stress that we draw a clear distinction between *experts* and *professionals*, with professionals denoting people who earn their living from translation. As argued above, expertise is institutionalised in professions, but not limited to professionals. This means that research on lived expertise does not have to focus exclusively on workplace settings but can also include non-professional translators and translation practices.

One of the first studies in this area was carried out by En and En (2019), who held semi-structured interviews with volunteer translators in an LGBTIQ* migrant community project. Some of these volunteers considered themselves translation experts and some did not, and the study reveals the discourses by

3. Researchers’ positionality, subjectivity and reflexivity are intensely discussed in qualitative research (see e.g., Holmes 2020).

which both groups construct the boundaries between experts and laypeople. Their constructions of (non-)expert identities are often based on personal backgrounds such as education, professional work experience or subject knowledge. En and En's (2019) theoretical approach is inspired by the sociology of science, and they draw thereby on Gieryn's (1983) notion of *boundary work*. This concept describes the identity-forming and boundary-drawing processes linked to the expertise discourse. Separating experts from non-experts serves to build identity and status and to create difference and distance. Similar to Grbić & Kujamäki (2019), En and En argue that the common distinctions in TS between professionals and experts or amateur translators and laypeople should be questioned and note that the research focus on professional translators fails to consider the majority of translation activities, i.e., those that take place outside a professional context. They also reject the notion of expertise as a "self-evident or objective category", seeing it instead as something that is "produced interactively by 'experts' and 'laypeople' alike as they engage in boundary work around who counts as an expert and who does not" (En & En 2019, 218). They suggest distinguishing between a conceptualisation of expertise that relates to the construction of identities through boundary work and one that relates to specific (translation) practices, describing the latter as *knowledge practices* that are multidimensional, situated and embodied, i.e., a sort of knowledge that is rather performed than possessed.

En and En's (2019) approach offers a fruitful foundation for research into lived expertise as it brings together two dimensions that at first glance do not seem compatible. Expertise is seen on the one hand primarily as a social construct, yet they do not disregard the idea that people engage in certain practices that enable them to perform their tasks successfully. Their notion of knowledge practices displays many parallels to Muñoz Martín's (2014) concept of situated expertise and Olohan's (2019) practice theory perspective on knowledge. Thus, their approach both connects with the recent discourse in TS and offers a fresh and critical perspective on translation expertise, namely as a social construct.

The findings of En and En's (2019) study also suggest that this social construct does not necessarily consider which knowledge practices people engage in. Both experts and laypeople reflect on their work on a meta level, and participants from both groups expressed "lay" understandings of translation. A binary distinction between experts and non-experts on the basis of education or professional work experience apparently does not do justice to the diverse web of knowledge practices in which people actually engage. Instead, it is a product of boundary work that is carried out not only by experts but also by non-experts and academia.

There is a long history in TS of drawing lines between expert and non-expert translators (Grbić & Kujamäki 2019; see also Koskinen & Dam 2016). TS scholars and professional translators, i.e., those people who (partly) earn their living

from translation, have engaged in boundary work and tried to establish a “discourse of occupational control” (Evetts et al. 2006, 110). However, given the status of translation and translators, these efforts do not yet appear to have been successful. While separating experts from non-experts establishes professional identities and (further) institutionalises a profession, translation does not yet formally qualify as such: it is still in the process of professionalisation (Tyulenev 2015; Dam & Koskinen 2016). What is more, there is a considerable difference between the way translators see themselves and how they are perceived by others. Translators are usually highly educated and “tend to see translation as an expert function requiring a high level of knowledge, skills and expertise” (Dam & Zethsen 2016, 175), a view that is not always shared by other people/non-translators (see also Liu 2022). Indeed, many translators complain about low levels of appreciation, status and pay (Dam & Zethsen 2016). This situation might be explained by an unsuccessful discourse on translation expertise: “[T]he general *lack of awareness/recognition of the level of expertise required to translate* may in fact be [...] the overall reason why translator status is relatively low” (Dam & Zethsen 2010, 207, original emphasis). Thus, a perspective on expertise as a social and discursive construct is also relevant for scholars and translators who are interested in the professionalisation of translation.

In this context, the sociology of knowledge could also provide some valuable starting points for translation studies. Pfadenhauer & Dieringer’s (2019) notion of professionalism as institutionalised *competence presentation competence* (*Professionalität als Kompetenzdarstellungskompetenz*), which builds on a staging theory perspective (cf. Goffmann 1956), is one example that springs to mind. It is grounded on the epistemological assumption that we cannot recognise social matters and phenomena *per se*, only presentations thereof. This means that any kind of performance in the sense of an individually attributable action by no means speaks for itself, it must instead be made visible, i.e., be presented, so that it can actually be perceived as such (Pfadenhauer & Dieringer 2019, 11). This applies not only to the immediate presentations in interactions but also to the deeper institutionalised structures. Highly institutionalised professions have a variety of ways of presenting their competence, which in this approach consists of a combination of three components: qualification, willingness and responsibility to solve an existing problem. The institutionalised presentation of competence comprises the rendering visible of (canonised) expertise, conduct befitting the professional habitus and evidence of qualifications and affiliation through education paths, certifications, uniforms, etc. For a profession to be understood as such, a functioning collective presentation of competence vis-à-vis other actors is essential (Pfadenhauer & Dieringer 2019, 8–9).

The competence presentation competence thus, in other words, combines the two expertise dimensions discussed above (knowledge practices and identity construction). Coming back to an established term in TS, we could also speak of *expertise performance* in a double sense of the term, namely as “both performing a show and the action of performing a task or a function” (Koskinen 2020, 97; see also Carr 2010). Whether this performance is perceived as successful and appropriate is negotiated on a social level and thus also ultimately depends on the power and status of the actors involved (cf. Schützeichel 2010).⁴ Likewise closely linked with the ascribing of expertise or competence is trust: if we ascribe expertise/competence to someone, we have trust in that person’s expertise/competence. This brings us full circle to translation research into trust (see, e.g., Abdallah and Koskinen 2007).

5. Conclusion: Researching lived expertise in context

We believe that there are several ways to advance research on translation expertise. To follow each one purposefully, it is clearly essential, as Alves and da Silva (2022, 156–157) point out, to be aware of the respective underlying notions of the scope of expertise research – or the concept of translation in general. In contrast to Alves and da Silva, we do *not* refer in our deliberations to a translation skill but rather to the broader levels above: translation as a task or activity, where expertise is multidimensional and complex. Accordingly, it has to be looked at in context. We thus propose a contextualisation and openness to various aspects (see below).

5.1 Seeing lived expertise as expertise in context

It has become almost a truism in our discipline to see translation as situated and context bound. However, if we take this seriously, we need to incorporate context more substantially into our research on translation expertise. ‘Real-world’ issues such as social, material, economic, political or ideological factors should not be left out of theoretical and methodological considerations. To see how they come into play in the various contexts in which expertise is constructed and lived every day, we suggest conducting qualitative research in these authentic contexts. In this light, expertise is not absolute or measurable (as it is often regarded in TPR) but emerges in interaction and depends on the context. It is relative to the situation as well as to who you ask (e.g., different practitioners, employers, clients,

4. Schützeichel (2010, 180) also speaks of an “epistemic regime”, builds – like Alves and da Silva (2021) – on Collins and Evans (2007), but expanded by power and status.

certifiers or scholars). Thus, we need to investigate how expertise is constructed and how these constructions become manifest in (communicative) actions, work processes and company structures. Ethnographically inspired approaches, participant observation, interviews and focus groups are particularly suitable for use in addressing these questions. Compared to existing research on expertise in TS/TPR, this represents a shift in focus from products or processes towards people – in line with Chesterman's (2009) notion of "Translator Studies". People thus supersede texts and internal processes – both as objects of investigation as well as critical factors in the definition and manifestation of expertise.

5.2 Being open to new perspectives

Expertise research profits greatly from interdisciplinary approaches, which should not be limited to adopting paradigms from cognitive psychology. In particular, drawing inspiration from the sociology of knowledge will allow us to integrate the dimension of the social and discursive construction of expertise and experts. This implies expanding the focus from objectivity to subjectivity, from micro-process and product-centred approaches to macro-process and person-centred approaches. In essence, we advocate viewing expertise not merely as superior performance but as performance in the double meaning of the term, including the social enactment and construction. We could even discuss "expert action in the making" (Sutton & Bicknell 2021, 200) in the triple sense: "in the making" in the interactive and embedded/embodyed doing sense, in the learning sense (What do I do to get where I want to be?) and in the construction sense (expertise is not something we have, it is something we do – also socially and discursively; see also Carr 2010 on various enactments of expertise).

However, new and enriching perspectives can be found not only in science but also in the community that is being studied. Thus, we propose not to emphasise academic notions of expertise, but to shift the focus towards the conceptualisations of the emic community. This community, in turn, does not have to be limited to professional translators – it can also include paraprofessional and non-professional translators as well as other people working with translations in some other way.

5.3 Addressing new questions and revisiting old questions from new perspectives

There are many potential future research questions, some of which relate to established topics in research on translation expertise, others which are a step further away: What does expertise mean for the social actors involved? Which aspects


are considered most important? Do these aspects reflect any findings from expertise research (e.g., superior performance, expertise indicators, deliberate practice, etc.) in TS/TPR? On what basis are arguments formed (market expectations, universities or professional associations, company policy, etc.)? In which ways do the manifold constructions overlap or differ? How do these constructions become visible in (communicative) actions, work processes and company structures? Who acts as an expert in which situations? What enables a translator to successfully navigate their tasks? How does expertise develop in situ? Is the expertise discourse used strategically (e.g., for the purpose of self-legitimation, to create power structures, or to institutionalise the profession)? What is (not) said to whom? What are the differences between what people do and what they say they do? Are there tensions and conflicts that arise from differences between self-perception and external perception (e.g., expertise not being acknowledged)? If so, how are they dealt with?

In order to obtain a multi-layered, socio-cognitive picture of translation expertise, we need to also explore the connections between all these aspects: between the different dimensions of expertise performance, between manifestation and construction, and between acting as doing and acting as portraying. This list is by no means exhaustive: many different topics could also emerge – things we don't even know about yet because we will see them for the first time in the emic world.

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