

Chapter 14

“All I know is that I know nothing”? Empirical evidence of self-confidence and inexperience in novice vs. professional translators

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In the last few decades, translation competence (TC) has been largely investigated but “most of the proposals concerning TC have not been empirically tested and only a few of them have attempted to validate their models from an empirical-experimental perspective” (Hurtado Albir & Alves 2009: 64). Drawing on this, an empirical longitudinal study has been designed to investigate whether TC can be defined in terms of specific textual and procedural patterns shared by professional translators and observe whether such trends are being developed by trainee translators throughout their training. The investigation mainly relies on the contrastive analysis of multiple translations of the same six source texts produced at regular intervals over three years (2012-2014) by translators at different stages in the development of their TC and considers a variety of textual and procedural features in the attempt to identify possible patterns in the groups of participants. This paper focuses on some process-related results providing evidence of unawareness and self-confidence in novice vs. more experienced trainees and professional translators.

1 Introduction

Any learning process implies a progress from (relative) ignorance to the acquisition of knowledge. Any learner should thus be aware of being somehow lacking and in search of something she does not possess. This awareness can be considered the driving force behind the learning process, allowing the learner to



recognise and ultimately reach the final goal of her path. However, such consciousness is often gained through learning and experience since it is acquired knowledge itself that opens up new horizons in the learner's mind, making her aware of knowledge yet to be attained.

Empirical research in Translation Studies suggests that “novices are blissfully unaware of their ignorance” (Jääskeläinen 1996: 67) and tend to be more self-confident than their actual competence would justify. This paper will provide further insights into unawareness and self-confidence in novice vs. professional translators obtained through a longitudinal empirical study on translation competence (TC) and its development.

2 Preliminary theoretical remarks

Research on TC has been quite productive in the last few decades, devising a wide variety of possible definitions and models for both didactic and professional purposes. Still, despite the ever-increasing efforts put into the empirical analysis of TC and its development, little consensus has been reached in academia on the nature and modelling of such competence.

TC is generally assumed to be “qualitatively different from bilingual competence” (PACTE 2002: 44–45; cf. Lörcher 2012) and non-innate (Shreve 1997: 121) since a “basic translation ability is a necessary condition, but no guarantee, for further development of a (professional) competence as a translator, and possibly expertise in translation” (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 12). Except for these two widely agreed-upon assumptions, a considerable number of concurrent terms and conceptual frameworks have been devised in the attempt to identify the essential constitutive components of TC (for an overview, cf. Orozco & Albir 2002; Quinci 2015a). Most recent approaches tend to opt for a multicomponential conceptualisation of TC, which would be made up of a varying number of different or (partially) overlapping sub-competences that are generally deemed to be interdependent and interacting with one another. Recently, these have also been represented as individual vortices gradually merging in the larger vortex of translation supercompetence, in which the unpredictable number and types of linkages between the different sub-components increases with training and experience (Király 2013).

Although empirical research on TC has still a long way to go, from the mid-1980s onwards, empirical studies have considerably contributed to the investigation of TC and have, in some cases, resulted in the development of empirically validated definitions and models (Göpferich 2009; PACTE 2003). Most em-

irical evidence, however, relate to the translation process, i.e. to the analysis of behavioural and procedural features of (un)experienced translators, so as to identify possible common patterns which might be conducive to high (or poor) translation quality. To provide a complementary perspective to such mainstream methodology, an empirical longitudinal study has been designed adopting a combined approach, which is mainly product-oriented but also encompasses process-related data. Partial results from the aforementioned research project will be presented in the following sections, suggesting a higher degree of self-confidence and unawareness in novices as compared to (more) experienced translators.¹

Self-awareness and self-confidence are “two psychological features which are part of the make-up of a professional translator” (Kußmaul 1995: 32), with self-awareness (or self-concept) being often implicitly or explicitly included in most recent models of TC (Göpferich 2009; Kiraly 1995; PACTE 2003: 93). The two concepts are in fact “closely linked [as it] is through self-awareness that translators gain self-confidence” (Kußmaul 1995: 32) and ultimately “visualize themselves as text designers than as text reproducers” (Göpferich 2009: 34). Although these two psychological features should ideally be developed through specific training (Göpferich 2009: 34), it has been observed that when “students embark on a translator training course, they are quite self-confident young people, but in the course of their studies they lose their self-confidence as a result of the criticism of their teachers” (Kußmaul 1995: 32). This is in line with the results of this study, showing an unjustified higher level of self-confidence in novice translators (which is not supported by equally high-quality outcomes) which gradually decreases throughout their training. However, this is not necessarily due to teachers’ criticism, but may also result from a growing ability to assess translation quality and identify translation errors and problems, which is progressively developed throughout the training programme.

3 Research design and methodology

Given its longitudinal design, the study included six translation tasks which have been performed at regular intervals over a three-year period, so as to analyse from a synchronic perspective the discrepancies and similarities in the performances of translators with different levels of TC and monitor diachronically the evolution of such patterns in the same groups of participants. The 63 vol-

¹At the time of writing the PhD research project was still ongoing. Its final results and conclusions are now available (Quinci 2015b) and can be accessed at <http://hdl.handle.net/10077/10986>.

untary participants at different stages in the development of their TC included BA, first- and second-year MA translation trainees and professional translators, falling into four distinct groups, i.e. Group N ('novices'), Group I₁ and Group I₂ (first- and second-year 'intermediates'), and Group P ('professionals') respectively. The internal composition of the four groups has remained almost completely unchanged throughout the duration of the study, even though the cohorts included in the groups of intermediates (i.e., Ia, Ib, Ic, and Id) have varied during the investigation alongside students' progress in their training programme, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Internal composition of the sample

	Academic Year		
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BA Students (Novices)	GROUP N: 13 1 st -year students	GROUP N: 13 2 nd -year students	GROUP N: 13 3 rd -year students
1 st year MA Students (Intermediates)	GROUP I ₁ (Ia): 7 1 st -year students	GROUP I ₁ (Ic): 10 1 st -year students	GROUP I ₁ (Id): 12 1 st -year students
2 nd year MA Students (Intermediates)	GROUP I ₂ (Ib): 10 2 nd -year students	GROUP I ₂ (Ia): 7 2 nd -year students	GROUP I ₂ (Ic): 9 2 nd -year students
Professionals	GROUP P: 9 participants	GROUP P: 9 then 8 participants	GROUP P: 8 participants
Partic. per year	39	39 then 38	42

The tasks were specifically designed to gather both product- and process-related data and involved the translation of six non-specialist articles from English into Italian, the participants' mother tongue, as well as a post-task questionnaire investigating the translation process. Despite the study's primarily product-oriented approach involving twelve different variables (e.g. expansions and reductions, lexicometric measures, lexical density and variation, vocabulary analysis), this paper only focuses on some process-related data highlighting novices' self-confidence and unawareness, which are then contrasted with data on translation acceptability. Given its primary orientation towards product analysis, the study did not resort to think-aloud protocols (TAPs), screen activity recordings or other methods generally used for gathering process data, but only to a post-task questionnaire regarding different process-related issues, e.g. the first reading and the perceived level of difficulty of the ST, the revision process, the reference materials used, other training and working activities which could affect the development of TC.

The analysis outlined in the following sections integrates data concerning the use of reference materials, revision and acceptability into existing provisional results relating to delivery time, self-assessment and perceived text difficulty, which in this case also include new data from the fifth translation task. After a brief overview of previous results (Quinci 2015a), the analysis focuses on data about the use of reference materials and revision and finally relates all the above process-related data with the evaluation of translation acceptability, so as to point out the procedural features shared by all good-performing participants.

For a more reader-friendly representation of the patterns identified, the tables below simultaneously show the groups’ scores and ranking by means of conditional formatting using a colour scale from red to green to differentiate high, middle, and low values respectively. Finally, the thicker lines in the tables divide the tasks performed in the same academic year (and thus by the same cohorts of participants), i.e. 2011/2012 for tasks 1 and 2, 2012/2013 for tasks 3 and 4, and 2013/2014 for task 5.

4 Previous results: A follow-up

First results from the joint analysis of participants’ delivery time, self-assessment and perceived text difficulty scores showed a high level of self-confidence in novice translators. In particular, novices generally recorded comparatively low delivery time and high self-assessment scores which appear not to result from underestimating the task difficulty, but rather from overestimating their translation abilities and probably from their limited ability to assess translation quality.

Table 2: Average delivery time per group and task

	N	I ₁	I ₂	P
T1	01:26	01:47	01:39	01:25
T2	01:30	01:34	01:42	01:07
T3	01:28	01:43	01:28	01:00
T4	01:26	01:35	01:33	01:13
T5	01:29	01:33	01:36	01:14
mean	01:28	01:39	01:36	01:12

As concerns the average delivery time, professionals show the highest rates, followed by novices who consistently performed faster than both groups of inter-

Table 3: Average self-assessment scores on a scale from 1 to 10

	N	I ₁	I ₂	P
T1	7.4	6.9	7.0	7.2
T2	7.1	6.8	6.7	7.5
T3	7.4	7.1	6.7	7.5
T4	7.2	7.0	6.7	7.1
T5	7.2	7.0	6.8	7.3
mean	7.26	6.96	6.78	7.32

Table 4: Average perceived text difficulty on a scale from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult)

	N	I ₁	I ₂	P
T1	2.53	2.85	2.70	2.66
T2	3.23	3.14	3.10	2.66
T3	2.76	2.90	2.85	2.66
T4	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.87
T5	3.15	2.75	2.78	3.25
mean	2.93	2.92	2.88	2.82

mediates (Table 2). Likewise, novices and professionals display similar patterns in self-assessment (Table 3), where they alternatively recorded the highest scores in the five translation tasks. Self-assessment also shows an interesting pattern as concerns the two groups of intermediates, who consistently ranked in the same order as their supposed level of competence, with first-year MA students preceding second-year trainees in all tasks except for task 1. This would suggest a sort of interdependency between the development of TC and the self-perception of the quality of the performance. Such relation could be described as a parabola opening upwards, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Higher scores in self-assessment are recorded by both the least and most experienced participants, i.e. novices and professionals. On the other hand, intermediates, who are (supposed to be) halfway through the development of TC, tend to record consistently lower self-assessment scores as compared to novices despite their longer experience and advanced training in translation. One of the

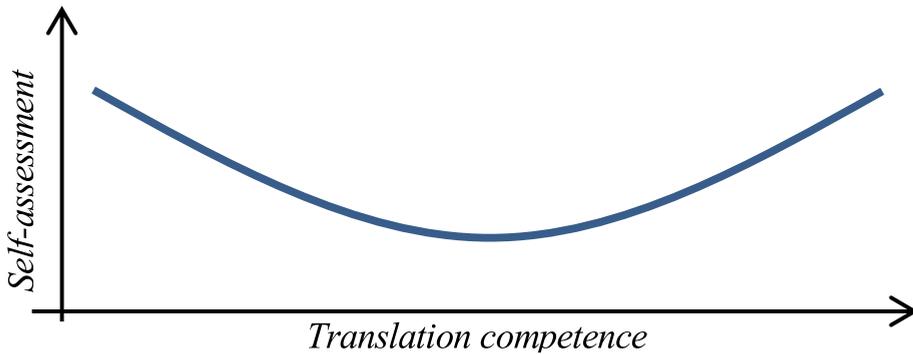


Figure 1: Relation between self-assessment scores and the development of translation competence

possible reasons for this trend might be sought in the lack of awareness of the actual level of difficulty of the task at hand in novice translators as compared to intermediates. Empirical data however do not seem to support this hypothesis.

As summarised in Table 4 above, novices did not in fact perceive the task as less difficult as compared to the other groups, given that they scored highest in two tasks out of five and their ranking considerably varied from one task to another. Also, self-assessment scores and the average perceived text difficulty appear to be mostly in inverse proportion, which means that the highest self-assessment scores of each group mostly correspond to the tasks perceived as the simplest, and vice versa. This implies that all groups of participants are somehow able to evaluate the difficulty of given tasks and tend to rank them accordingly.

Hence, given that novices' comparatively high self-assessment scores cannot be ascribed to their inability to evaluate the level of difficulty of the translation task, the trends observed might more probably result from the overestimation of their abilities as translators or their limited ability of assessing translation quality – or ultimately from a combination of both.

The hypothesis of a limited ability to assess translation quality appears to be further supported by the correlation between self-assessment scores and the stage of development of TC outlined above. MA-level trainees' lower scores in self-assessment might indeed suggest an increased awareness of and/or ability in evaluating translation quality which could result from their advanced theoretical and practical training in translation. Obviously, this assumption needs further confirmation found in the assessment of translation acceptability, the results of which are illustrated in a later section.

5 Other clues from process-related data: Reference material and revision

5.1 The use of reference material

The analysis of other process-related data elicited from the questionnaires has highlighted other patterns concerning the supposed level of TC of the different groups of translators. In particular, as concerns information literacy, participants were asked to specify the number and type of different reference materials used selecting one or more options among those included in the relevant multiple-choice question, i.e. bi- and monolingual paper/on-line/off-line dictionaries, glossaries, on-line general search engines and other possible reference materials to be specified.

From a mere quantitative perspective, i.e. considering the number of different resource materials used in each task (Table 5), professionals generally relied on a more restricted variety of reference materials, in contrast with Künzli's observations (2001:513). Also, they mainly used mono- and bilingual dictionaries, as opposed to students who also heavily relied on on-line search engines to look for parallel texts or occurrences.

Table 5: Average number of different reference materials used

	N	I ₁	I ₂	P
T1	2.25	3.14	2.80	2.22
T2	2.15	2.71	2.60	2.44
T3	2.77	2.60	2.71	1.89
T4	2.85	2.86	2.90	2.38
T5	2.92	2.75	2.44	2.38
mean	2.59	2.81	2.69	2.26

From a qualitative point of view, i.e. when considering the types of reference materials used, the analysis shows that bilingual dictionaries were used by 75-100% and are therefore the preferred type of reference materials, which would also confirm the findings of earlier TAP studies observing the frequency of use of bilingual dictionaries by (non) professional translators (Jensen 1999; Krings 1986; Künzli 2001). The second most commonly used reference materials are general-purpose search engines, followed by monolingual dictionaries which hold the

third and final position in the ranking being used on average by approximately 54% of novices and professionals and by nearly 69% of intermediates.

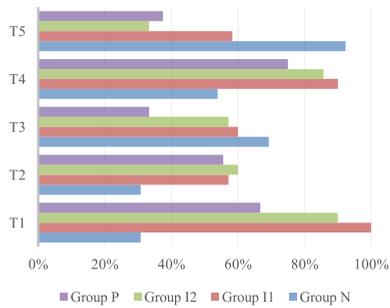


Figure 2: Percentage of participants per group using monolingual dictionaries

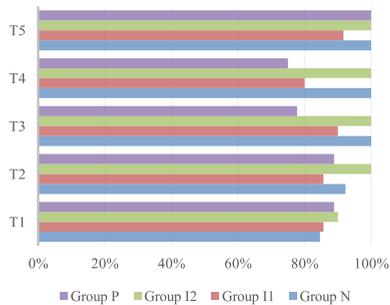


Figure 3: Percentage of participants per group using bilingual dictionaries

The data on the type reference materials used confirm the trends observed in the quantitative analysis, with professionals mostly ranking in the lower positions and thus referring to a lesser extent to either type of dictionaries. As concerns bilingual dictionaries, a higher average percentage of translation trainees – both novices and intermediates – resorted to bilingual dictionaries as compared to professionals.

Novices, on the other hand, ranked lowest in three out of five tasks as concerns the use of monolingual dictionaries, which are mostly used by intermediates and professionals. This appears to confirm the results from previous research where more experienced translator “showed a greater preference for monolingual print and CD/DVD dictionaries than the students did (5th vs. 9th rank)” (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow 2011: 197–198; cf. Ronowicz et al. 2005: 590), although contrary evidence has also been found by Künzli (2001: 513–514).

Finally, data also suggest the existence of another pattern of association between age/competence/experience and the use of general Internet search engines, which seems more common among novices as compared to professionals, who consistently rank last (Figure 4).

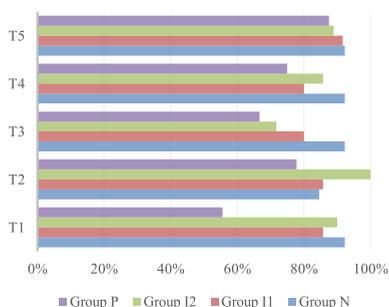


Figure 4: Percentage of participants per group using general search engines

This would support the claim that “age is related to the use of Internet resources [as] younger cohorts of translators (i.e. those under 50 years old) are more likely to say that they often or very often use search engines, online multilingual dictionaries, online encyclopedias, and terminology databases to solve linguistic problems than older translators do” (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow 2011: 201). However, it should be pointed out that the professional translators in Group P had on average an age of 44, with only one of them older than 50 when entering the sample. Nonetheless, a relation between age and the use of online search engines seems to exist, although it could be equally attributed to the participants’ age or their level of TC for lack of direct evidence: trainees, in other words, might be compensating for the lack of information with an increased used of search engines.

It should also be noticed that professionals’ low rankings in the use of almost all reference materials (see Figures 2, 3 and 4) might in this case be related to their more restricted use of reference materials in general (Table 5). Other studies on the number of dictionary look-ups have indeed observed “a reduction in the number of dictionary searches as a function of expertise” (Lesznyák 2008: 200; cf. Jensen 1999: 113; Ronowicz et al. 2005: 588). Such limited use of reference materials, in terms of both variety and frequency, might result from professionals’ deeper knowledge of both the source and target language, or better from what Bell defined as “Frequent Lexis Store” (FLS), viz. the “mental (psycholinguistic) correlate to the physical *glossary* or *terminology database*, i.e., an instant

‘look-up’ facility for lexical items both ‘words’ and ‘idioms’” (1991:47, original emphasis). As pointed out by Ronowicz et al. (2005: 583), “[o]ne would [...] expect that more experienced translators will have a larger and more diversified FSS [Frequent Structures Store] and FLS, which should influence the speed and quality of their performance” – and ultimately foster the development of justified self-confidence and self-awareness. This hypothesis would be indeed supported by the higher frequency of dictionary searches in novices observed in the above-mentioned TAP studies, as suggested by Ronowicz et al. (2005: 589), as well as by the above results concerning the different reference materials used and the participants’ delivery time, where professionals consistently performed faster than the other groups.

5.2 Revision and supposed level of translation competence

As concerns the revision of the target texts (TTs) produced within the study, participants were asked to indicate whether they had self-revised their translations or not and, if yes, whether they carried out “unilingual” and/or “comparative re-reading” (Mossop 2014: App. 5), i.e. whether they checked their translations by reading only their TTs (unless in doubtful cases where comparison with the ST was needed) or by consistently comparing TT and ST.

Quantitatively speaking, all participants performed unilingual or comparative self-revision except for one translator in groups I₁ and I₂ in tasks 1 and 3 and 1 and 5 respectively. It should be noted that in the first task of Group I₁ and in the third task of Group I₂ it is the same participant of cohort Ia (Ia1) who did not carry out any sort of self-revision.

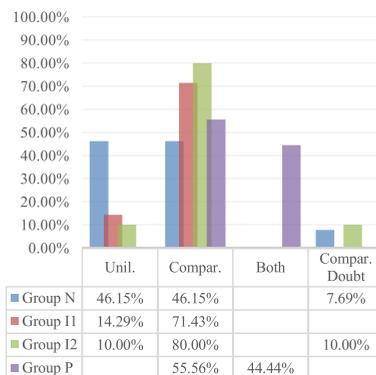


Figure 5: Types of self-revision in relation to the ST in task 1 (percentage of participants per group)

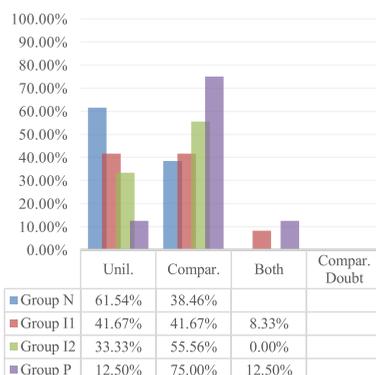


Figure 6: Types of self-revision in relation to the ST in task 5 (percentage of participants per group)

Conversely, the data on the type of self-revision carried out do show clear patterns. As is apparent from Figure 5 and Figure 6 above, the supposed level of TC seems to considerably affect the translators’ approach to revision. None of the professionals relied on simple unilingual self-revision whereas novices tended not to compare the TT and ST and seldom carried out both unilingual and comparative self-revision. Data highlight a rather consistent shift from unilingual to comparative self-revision in (more) experienced translators, with unilingual self-revision being the preferred option for novices and first-year intermediates in four out of five tasks. Conversely, second-year intermediates and professionals mostly relied on comparative self-revision, which is the most-chosen option in four tasks out of five for Group I₂ and in all tasks for Group P. Also, professionals are the only group which carried out both unilingual and comparative self-revision in all tasks, though with a decreasing percentage of participants throughout the five tasks.

These trends once again suggest self-confidence in less experienced translators, who do not seem aware that their translations might need careful self-revision. As pointed out by Tirkkonen-Condit (1992: 439), “[t]he professional is more modest, and more sensitized to noticing those areas in her translation that may need checking. The non-professional, in contrast, seems to be more arrogant in her approach and does not voice a need to have her translation checked”.

Moreover, as reported by Mossop (2007), Brunette et al. (2005) found that “comparative revision [yields] a better quality final product than unilingual, not only (as one might expect) with regard to accuracy but also with regard to the readability, the linguistic correctness and the appropriateness to purpose and to

readership of the revised translations”. Such an inattentive and rather superficial approach to the final phase of the translation process might thus considerably affect translation quality, which is presumed to improve following more accurate checking.

6 Process-related data and translation acceptability

The research design of the empirical study also involved the quality assessment of the TTs produced by the sample, with the aim to find possible correlations between the supposed levels of TC of the participants, the textual and procedural patterns identified and translation quality, which was assessed in terms of both translation acceptability and translation error analysis. Given the considerable number of TTs produced (239) and the need for experienced external evaluators who could assess all the translations in order to ensure consistent assessment, the best option for evaluating translation acceptability was the use of the experimentally verified (Castillo Rincón 2010) method devised by PACTE based on the so-called “rich points” (PACTE 2005b, PACTE 2009). This method involves the identification of specific textual elements in the ST, i.e. rich points (RPs) which “provide variety in the types of translation problems studied, [and] do not lead to immediate and acceptable solutions” (PACTE 2005a: 614). Such RPs, which in this study have been identified by several participants from each group, have been evaluated as ‘acceptable’, ‘partially acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable’ by three translator trainers on the basis of the criteria identified by PACTE (2009: 217), so as to obtain a numeric ‘acceptability index’ (AI). Based on their AIs – ranging from 0 to 9, as the number of RPs identified in each ST –, participants were divided in five different performance levels: Level I (0-1.9); Level II (2-3.9); Level III (4-5.9); Level IV (6-7.9); Level V (8-9).

The ranking of the average AIs in Figure 7 below shows that professionals are the outperforming group in three out of five tasks and recorded the second highest AI in tasks 1 and 3.

On the other hand, novices do not hold a stable position in the ranking, scoring the lowest AIs in tasks 1 and 2, the second and third highest indexes in tasks 4 and 5 respectively, and the highest AI in task 3. Similarly, second-year intermediates fluctuate between the highest and the lowest position, whereas first-year intermediates consistently scored the (second) lowest AIs in all tasks. It should be noted that Groups I₁ and I₂ scoring lowest in the last three tasks correspond to the same cohort (Ic), which consistently recorded the lowest AIs in all the three tasks carried out, with about 50% of its participants scoring low to medium AIs

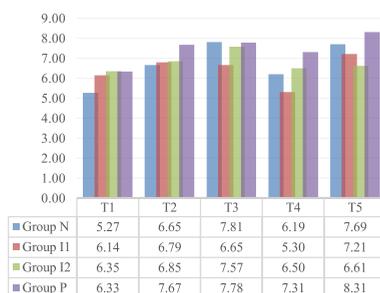


Figure 7: Average acceptability index per group

(between 4 and 5.5).² This might of course affect the analysis based on the final ranking shown in Figure 7, which thus needs to be supported by data on the distribution of the participants within the five abovementioned performance levels. The analysis considers the percentage of participants per group falling within each performance level (Table 6).

Table 6: Distribution of the participants within the performance levels in task 3

Task 3	N	I ₁	I ₂	P
PL I (0-1.9)				
PL II (2-3.9)				
PL III (4-5.9)	15.38%	40.00%		
PL IV (6-7.9)	38.46%	30.00%	71.42%	55.55%
PL V (8-9)	46.15%	30.00%	28.57%	44.44%

Table 6 above shows the internal distribution of the four groups in task 3, where novices scored the highest AI, followed by professionals and second- and first-year intermediates, respectively (see Figure 7). Despite their highest AI, however, only 84.61% of novices fell within the two highest levels of performance

²This does not imply that (all) trainees in cohort Ic have not developed their TC at all, but only that their AIs were *on average* lower as compared to those scored by the other groups. It should also be considered that students with different backgrounds and coming from different universities and degree programmes can enrol in the MA programme who might lack a proper training in translation. However, despite the presence of some consistently underperforming participants in cohort Ic, there was a general tendency for the whole cohort to score lower values, possibly because it simply comprised less trained, less motivated and/or less skilled translators.

(i.e. levels IV and V) as compared to 100% of both second-year intermediates and professionals. As in other tasks – the results of which are not reported here in detail for reasons of space – novices’ scores tend to cover a wider range of AIs (i.e. 5.5-9 in the third task) as compared to groups I₂ and P (i.e. 6.5-8 and 6.5-9 respectively in task 3), which means that more experienced translators tend to produce on average medium- to high-quality TTs, whereas novices include both out- and underperforming participants.

Hence, it could be concluded that professionals generally show a “consistently superior performance” (Jääskeläinen 2010: 215) as compared to less experienced translators, whose performances tend to spread across more performance levels.

7 Data triangulation: Painting the global picture

The comparative analysis of the variables examined in the previous sections suggests that novices’ comparatively lower delivery time and higher self-assessment scores do not result from an underestimation of the difficulty of the task to be performed. The almost consistent inverse proportion between self-assessment scores and average perceived text difficulty showed that all groups can assess the difficulty of the tasks and rank them accordingly. Hence, it seems that the development of TC and the self-perception of the quality of the performance are somehow related and that such relation may be represented as a parabola opening upwards – where TC is a continuum on the horizontal axis – with novices and professionals corresponding to the two ends of the branches and intermediates to the vertex in the lower part of the curve. This trend undoubtedly highlights a high level of self-confidence in novices, who seem unaware of their actual level of TC and/or the parameters for assessing translation quality.

Data on translation acceptability and self-revision seem to confirm this hypothesis since novices’ consistently high self-assessment scores do not always parallel high acceptability indexes. Also, novices tend to score lower AIs and distribute more heterogeneously among the five performance levels identified as compared to more experienced translators. In addition, novices seem to be the least careful revisers in the sample, as they tend to rely solely on unilingual self-revision, which does not allow for the easy detection of potential inaccuracies and omissions, as opposed to professionals who mostly performed comparative self-revision, followed in some cases by unilingual re-reading. Hence, the significant self-confidence displayed by novices appears unjustified and (at least partially) misplaced.

Their inexperience also emerges from the analysis of the number and type of different materials used, indicating that professionals generally needed a more restricted variety of reference materials and mainly used mono- and bilingual dictionaries, as opposed to students who also heavily relied on on-line search engines. This might suggest that, given that the STs were non-specialist articles dealing with well-known topics, professionals' wider FLS (Bell 1991: 47) allowed them to translate more effortlessly and quickly – and ultimately with better results as concerns translation acceptability.

The results of this analysis have been used to develop a model of TC describing the trends observed within the different stages identified in the development of TC (Quinci 2015b). In this model (Figure 8),³ TC is represented as a continuum extending from the initial stage of 'novice' to that of 'professional/competent' translator, thus describing the progressive evolution of the trends from one stage to the other.



Figure 8: The trends observed within the three stages of TC

In the first stages of their training, inexperienced (and necessarily) incompetent trainees tend to be overconfident and openly unaware of their lacking experience and competence in translation. This emerges from their superficial and simplistic approach to revision, which is often combined with low delivery time and high self-assessment. The trends observed in intermediate participants show instead that they have developed a greater awareness of their abilities and limits. They generally spent the longest time on the task and gradually shifted from unilingual to comparative self-revision. In spite of this, their consistently lower self-assessment scores as compared to novices testify to a general lack of self-confidence, probably combined with a greater awareness of the quality standards required of professional translators. This appears to be confirmed by the fact that intermediates tend to perform comparative (vs. unilingual) self-revision and ultimately reach higher levels of accuracy than novices. Finally, professionals ap-

³This is an abridged version of the original model, where other trends relating to the additional variables investigated within PhD research project are also included (cf. Quinci 2015b; available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10077/10986>).

peared to be fully aware of their competence and display a level of self-confidence that is proportional to the quality of their performance.

Another key feature of increasing TC is the development of time-management skills, which in turn lead to higher efficiency. Novices tend to be faster than intermediates but evidently do not use the time at their disposal to improve the quality of their work, as suggested by the data on self-revision, as opposed to professionals, who are the group placing the greatest focus on accuracy and meaning. Apparently, their more extended FLS and FSS (“Frequent Lexis Store” and “Frequent Structure Store”, Bell 1991) allow them to select equivalents faster than trainees and to focus on revision and accuracy, which ultimately increased the quality of their performance.

8 Concluding remarks

This paper has presented a longitudinal analysis of some process- and product-related data highlighting features of self-confidence and unawareness in novice vs. more experienced translators. Data have been collected within an empirical longitudinal study carried out at the University of Trieste with the aim to investigate TC and its development through a combined approach, which is primarily product-oriented but also included process-related data. The analysis outlined in the previous sections focused on the trends observed in the sample concerning the participants’ delivery time and self-assessment, the perceived difficulty of the tasks performed, the reference materials used and the revision phase of the translation process, as well as translation acceptability.

The contrastive analysis of less and more experienced and competent translators has highlighted the fundamental of training and experience by showing how these contribute to the development of self-monitoring skills and affect self-perception, in that they foster awareness in trainees of their still lacking competence and ultimately promote more careful revision and rigorous self-assessment.

The above findings might be of great help in translator training to raise awareness in trainees about the possible consequences of overconfidence, particularly when it is not supported by actual competence. From a pragmatic point of view, trainees might ultimately come to realise that they are still largely inexperienced (and thus in need of appropriate training) and that their inexperience needs to be – at least tentatively – compensated by careful revising and re-reading, which does not only improve the overall quality of their work, but also involves self-training and may encourage self-reflection on one’s strengths and weaknesses.

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