

# Receptor expectations and interlingual translation reception

Mikołaj Deckert

DOI: 10.18355/XL.2021.14.02.01

## Abstract

The fundamental question that this paper addresses is to what extent an individual's judgment of incoming linguistic stimuli – in the form of a translation product – can be thought of as static and objective, as opposed to dynamic and subjectively constructed. By extension, this article proposes that rather than being viewed (solely) as displaying a set of stable features, the target text can be construed as a cognitive construct that is dynamically shaped. This proposition is tested against the cognitive mechanisms of expectations.

I discuss two empirical studies examining how expectations about the authorship of translation, and therefore its characteristics like quality, can influence the audience's perception of the translation product. The question is examined for written translation (Study 1) and subtitling (Study 2). While in both cases, the central subject of inquiry are linguistic stimuli, in the latter case, these are embedded multimodally. The hypothesis is that generating certain product expectations through the use of linguistic cues will lead the audience to assess the product differently than in a condition where identical material is assessed without cuing or where opposite receptor expectations are generated. It is relevant to note that both experiments were conducted with students whose background included linguistics and translation. Such a participant profile could be associated with a more rigorously principled – and therefore stable – assessment of linguistic stimuli in both monosemiotic and polysemiotic contexts. This, in turn, would make our participants less susceptible to the effects of anticipatory cognition than would be the case with participants without formal training in the relevant fields.

**Key words:** language and cognition, judgment, audience, linguistically-triggered expectations, translation reception

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## 1. Introduction

Reading texts and watching films are among the activities that individuals engage in commonly. Making basic judgments such as estimating how much one enjoys reading a text or watching a film should therefore be a straightforward task that can be performed reliably. It would follow from this that if we are dealing with a well-designed or flawed product, be it text, film, or a combination of both, our perception of its features, such as quality, should be fairly stable, as opposed to easily shaped. In this paper, I look into the question of whether generating expectations in receptors of translated written text and film can significantly influence the receptors' perception of the product. This contribution therefore aspires to add to the body of work in translation reception studies that has already been accumulating (e.g. Di Giovanni and Gambier, 2018). From another angle, with their focus on the underpinnings of cognitive processes, the studies I report show affinity to the work that uncovers and examines the multiple factors that shape judgment in translation (Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey, 2014; Risku, 2017; Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017; Muñoz, 2017). The critical point of convergence for those studies and those discussed in this paper is to view cognitive processes as situated and therefore subject to the influence of multifarious parameters. Given the translator-oriented focus of research approaches like the ergonomics of translation, it should be pointed out that in this paper we are primarily

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concerned with receptors, and only secondarily with translators, in the sense of target text production.

In the following section I introduce the relevant constructs by mapping out some of the inquiries into the role of expectations. Then, in sections 3 and 4 I report two experimental studies involving novice translators.

## 2. Expectations

Predictions are utilized continually and extensively on a daily basis. While performing actions such as walking down a crowded corridor we make predictions about the movements of others to be able to progress smoothly. When attempting to kick a rolling ball we make predictions about the ball's trajectory and speed to coordinate our body with the object's future location. The important role of expectations in cognition and behavior was pointed to by James (1890), and prediction was identified as a parameter that importantly influences human functioning even earlier as Bacon (1620/1939) relevantly points out that:

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate.

These remarks are consistent with the mechanism that came to be known as the "confirmation bias" which Casad defines as a case of "processing information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs" (2007: 162). The phenomenon, also referred to as "congeniality bias" (Eagly, Chaikinen, 2005; Hart et al., 2009), has been described as one of the most problematic aspects of cognition and one which is both strong and pervasive (Nickerson, 1998: 175). A related cognitive mechanism is "motivated reasoning" (Kunda, 1990; Molden, Higgins, 2005) where the reasoner's motivation is to arrive at a conclusion which can be either accurate or predefined (cf. Kruglanski, Klar, 1987; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, 1987).

Construed more broadly, these mechanisms can be seen as rooted in one of social psychology's major theories – the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957, 1964) – i.e. the proposition that an individual faced with conflicting cognitions experiences an "aversive state of arousal" (Cooper, Goren, 2007: 149) or "psychological tension" (Ketterer, Han, 2007: 266), a tension that the person seeks to reduce. The reduction can be accomplished by "removing dissonant cognitions, adding new consonant cognitions, reducing the importance of dissonant cognitions, or increasing the importance of consonant cognitions" (Harmon-Jones, Mills, 1999: 4).

Bubic et al. (2010) talk about "predictive processing" that they understand as "any type of processing which incorporates or generates not just information about the past or the present, but also future states of the body or the environment". Anticipatory processing plays an important role in visual perception whereby the processing of actual stimuli is coupled with the use of predictions (Bullier, 2001; O'Callaghan et al., 2017). A prominent theory is that of "predictive coding" (Rao, Balard, 1999; Friston, Kiebel, 2009), whose underlying argument could be broadly summarized as follows:

"the brain is equipped with an internal model of the world, or multiple models of specific aspects of the world embedded in different brain regions. This internal model encodes possible causes of sensory inputs as parameters of a

generative model. New sensory inputs are then represented in terms of these known causes. Determining which combination of the many possible causes best fits the current sensory data is achieved through a process of minimising the error between the sensory data and the sensory inputs predicted by the expected causes.” (Spratling 2017: 92-93)

These mechanisms have been investigated for auditory and visual modalities (Denham, Winkler, 2017; Edwards et al., 2017; Carbajal, Malmierca, 2018; Okada et al., 2018) as well as action (Kilner, 2011; Shipp et al., 2013). Evidence highlighting the role of predictive processing has also been accumulating in psychology across domains ranging from health (Chang et al., 2012) to performance assessment (Darley, Gross, 1983).

If we look further, a relevant body of research has been done on the placebo effect (cf. Price et al., 2008) which also importantly draws on expectations. There is evidence to indicate that expectations have the potential to initiate the release of endogenous opioids that can inhibit the transmission of pain (Pollo et al., 2001). As summarized by Sauro and Greenberg (2005: 115) in their review, expectations result in “discrete physiological changes” and what is more “the data quantitatively support several decades of literature suggesting that the expectation of analgesia does indeed affect self-report of pain” (Sauro, Greenberg, 2005: 118). In that vein, there is evidence to suggest that placebo could benefit patients with depression (e.g. Leuchter et al., 2002), for instance, by influencing the metabolism of brain glucose (Mayberg et al., 2002).

With the amount of research into the different facets of anticipatory cognition, the two studies discussed below attempt to examine the mechanisms of prediction in the setting of interlingual translation.

### **3. Study 1: written translation reception**

#### **3.1 Participants, materials, and procedure**

The study involved 55 subjects who were all BA students at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Łódź in Poland. They were presented with a printed excerpt of the review of the film “Drive” written in English and its translation into Polish. The review was sourced from the online edition of The New York Times<sup>1</sup> and in the study, the review’s opening paragraph was used, as presented in Table 1 below. The participants’ task, carried out in writing, was to provide their feedback on a number of characteristics of the Polish translation, as will be detailed further on.

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<sup>1</sup> The review was accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/movies/drive-with-ryan-gosling-review.html>.

Source text	Target text
<p>A long time ago, as a young filmmaker besotted with the hard-boiled pleasures of classic Hollywood, Jean-Luc Godard claimed that all anyone needed to make a film was a girl and a gun. In his new movie, “Drive,” Nicolas Winding Refn, in thrall to a later Hollywood tradition, tests out a slightly different formula. In this case all you need is a guy and a car.</p>	<p>Dawno temu młody filmowiec odurzony surowym urokiem klasycznego Hollywood, Jan Luc-Goddard oświadczył, że do nakręcenia filmu potrzebna jest jedynie broń i kobieta. W swym nowym filmie “Drive” Nicolas Winding Refn, ulegając późniejszej hollywoodzkiej tradycji, eksperymentuje z inną formułą: w tym przypadku potrzebny jest tylko facet i jego broń.</p>

**TABLE 1.**

The target text was based on an authentic translation that was modified to feature specific issues. The text was prepared in such a way as not to be clearly flawed but at the same time to contain target variants that are unambiguous examples of inferior quality, such as typos in the name of the director and the passage “a guy and a car” translated as “facet i jego broń” [a guy and his gun] whereby ‘car’ is translated as ‘broń’ [gun], or a typographical issue with the upper opening apostrophe which could be questioned in Polish. However, the types and severity of mistakes is not the focus in this paper.

Subjects were explicitly requested to assess the quality of translation and were informed that the ST came from a review of the film “Drive”. The participants were assigned to one of three experimental conditions, which will be referred to with the labels “amateur”, “professional” and “neutral” further on in the article. The manipulation across the conditions had to do with the information that was provided about the authorship of the TT, or lack thereof. Subjects in the amateur condition learned that the translation into Polish was done by “an inexperienced amateur translator” while subjects in the professional condition were cued that the translation came from “an experienced professional translator”. In the “neutral” condition, no authorship information was given. In each condition, the audience perception of the translated product was expressed by answering a total of 7 questions. All the questions were phrased with emphasis on intelligibility. Therefore, for instance, while the idea of “closeness to the original” could be hard to operationalize<sup>2</sup>, we relied on the idea that the metaphoric mapping of proximity between STs and TTs is basic and intuitive enough for the subjects to get a grasp. This choice eliminates the problem of varied prior acquaintance with TS literature and methodologies across the participant pool.

Questions 1 to 5 used Likert-type answer format and were as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> On a similar note, operationalisation of quality or enjoyment poses no methodological challenge in this study. While these notions will be elusive, the aim in the study is not to define enjoyment or ensure participants understand it uniformly. Even if enjoyment or quality was something different to each participant in the study, the point is to test if this possibly variable conceptualisation is going to be re-shaped by expectations which are manipulated across conditions.

Question phrasing <sup>3</sup>	Question shorthand
1. How much did you enjoy reading the Polish text?	Enjoyment
2. How close is the translation to the original?	Closeness to the ST
3. How much of the original is omitted?	Omissions rate
4. How much of the original is mistranslated?	Mistranslation rate
5. What is the general quality of the target text?	Overall quality

**TABLE 2.**

In question 6 the objective was to obtain information about the perception of the TT by asking participants to state how much they estimated the translator should be paid for translating the fragment they read, and then a full 3-page review<sup>4</sup>. The question was formulated in plain English and an open answer format was used, requiring participants to provide numerical estimates. Below I present the results for the particular questions.

### 3.2 Results

#### ENJOYMENT

For this category and the remaining four questions to which replies were provided on a 1-7 Likert-type scale, answers from a total of 54 subjects were computed, 20 in the amateur condition, 17 in the professional condition and 17 in the neutral condition. One subject in the professional condition consistently failed to provide answers to the first 5 questions. The mean scores of enjoyment for the respective conditions are: 4.35, 4.76 and 3.88. The differences between results are not statistically significant in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

#### CLOSENESS TO THE ST

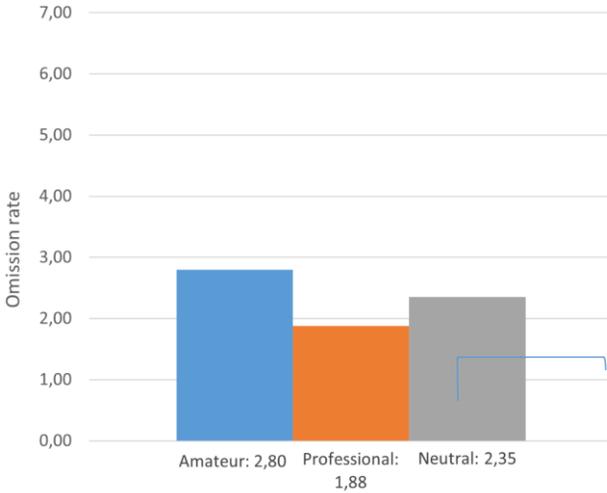
The mean values of estimations for the professional, amateur and neutral conditions were: 5.2, 5.12 and 4.47. The differences between results are not statistically significant in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

#### OMISSION RATE

Contrary to question 1 and 2 above, in this question higher scores would denote lower quality, the assumption being that omission – at least in the general and naive sense – is not a desirable translation operation. The mean scores for the amateur, professional and neutral conditions are 2.8, 1.88 and 2.35, as illustrated in Figure 1.

<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire was administered in English which was a natural choice given that English is the language of instruction at the institution where the study was conducted.

<sup>4</sup> For illustrations of variable uses of such money-based metrics in research on expectations and beyond cf. e.g. Shiv et al. (2005) as well as Fausey and Boroditsky (2010).

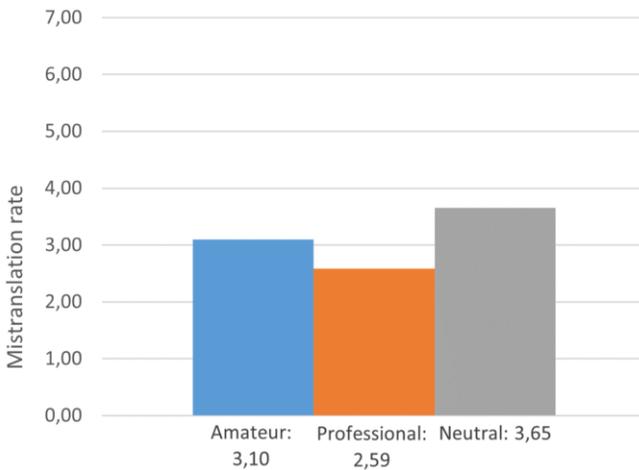


**FIGURE 1.**

The cross-condition difference is significant at  $p < .05$  between the amateur and professional conditions with  $p = .0316$  in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test (U-value is 99, Z-Score is 2.14856). Participants in the amateur condition judge the translation to be characterized by a higher degree of omission than participants in the professional condition. The amateur vs. neutral and professional vs. neutral differences are not statistically significant.

### **MISTRANSLATION RATE**

Analogously to the question about omission above, in this case a higher score is indicative of lower quality. The mean estimates for the amateur, professional and neutral conditions amount to 3.1, 2.59 and 3.65, as showed below.

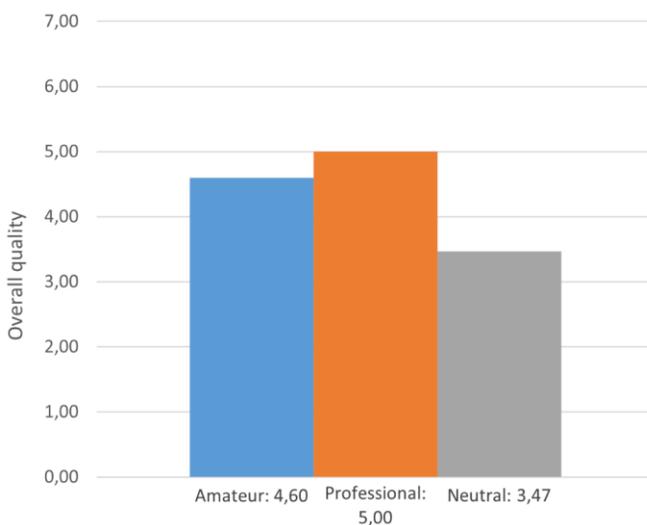


**FIGURE 2.**

The differences between the amateur condition and professional condition nor amateur and neutral conditions are not statistically corroborated. However, the mean score difference is significant at  $p < .05$  between the professional and neutral conditions with  $p = .03$  in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test (U-value = 81, Z-Score = -2.16994). Participants who evaluated the translation in the neutral condition found the degree of mistranslation to be higher than was the case for participants in the professional condition.

### OVERALL QUALITY

For this more general question the mean scores were 4.6, 5.0 and 3.47 in the amateur, professional and neutral conditions respectively. The scores are illustrated in the figure below.



**FIGURE 3.**

The difference in estimations is not statistically confirmed between the amateur and professional conditions. There is, however, statistically confirmed difference at  $p < .05$  between the scores in the amateur and neutral conditions with  $p = .0111$  in the two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test (U-value = 86, Z-Score = 2.54475). The quality estimation is higher for the amateur condition than for the neutral condition. The difference is also significant between the professional and neutral conditions at  $p < .01$  with  $p = .0045$  in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test (U-value = 61.5, Z-Score = 2.84159). The quality estimation is higher for the professional condition than for the neutral condition.

### THE MONETARY VALUE OF TRANSLATION ASSIGNMENTS

The table below illustrates the value of remuneration that the subjects stated the translator should receive for rendering the relevant fragment and a full 3-page text. The number of replies collected in this question does not overlap with the number of replies from the earlier questions as some subjects did not provide estimates.

amateur		professional		neutral	
fragment	episode	fragment	episode	fragment	episode
5	75	2	75	5	40
19	200	3	60	15	300
7	60	3	60	10	180
5	45	2	70	5	45
-	-	5	90	5	50
-	90	-	-	-	-
2	60	-	-	-	60
-	-	2	25	6	60
10	93	-	80	-	-
15	120	-	-	2	50
10	80	3	75	4	30
15	120	2	300	4	90
0,6	75	5	60	2	75
5	75	15	120	15	75
5	200	12	75	5	60
	75	5	80	5	75
5	15	10	50	6,5	100
10	100	5	75	-	-
0	30				
10	120				

**TABLE 3. The remuneration estimates suggested for the translation of the assessed fragment and a full 3-page text, expressed in PLN**

The mean amounts were 7.73 in the amateur condition, 5.29 in the professional condition, and 6.39 in the neutral condition. Analogous estimates for a 3-page stretch of translation were 90.72, 86.33, and 86.00 in the respective conditions. The differences across conditions are not statistically significant in the case of either the shorter or longer stretch of text in the two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

### 3.3 Study 1: summary of findings

We find statistically confirmed differences between conditions in a number of comparisons. First, we find that in the category of omission, participants in the amateur condition evaluated the rate to be higher than participants in the professional condition did. It is interesting to note that in addition to the more ‘extreme’ conditions (amateur vs. professional) we find statistically confirmed differences between the professional and neutral condition. This is the case in the category of mistranslation, where the rate is evaluated as higher in the neutral condition than in the professional condition.

The vital result is that there are two cases of statistically corroborated differences in the question about the overall quality of the assessed translation. First, amateur

translation is evaluated more positively than the translation whose authorship remains undisclosed. Second, professional translation is also evaluated more favorably than the translation with no accompanying author information. While the difference in assessment could be expected in the case of professional vs. neutral condition, it might be counter-intuitive that the target text framed as amateur-produced also scores higher for quality than the target text whose author is not known to be either a professional or an amateur translator.

When it comes to the monetary evaluation, one striking finding is that our subjects – translation trainees, some of whom will soon be entering the job market – are very differently aware of the rates. With estimations of prices ranging from 2 PLN to 19 PLN for the short fragment and then from 15 PLN to 300 PLN for the larger piece, we see a lot of variation but no statistically significant differences between the three experimental conditions. What is more, a number of participants chose not to give their estimates, which could be taken as another indication of uncertainty.

## **4. Study 2: audiovisual translation reception**

### **4.1 Participants, materials, and procedure**

This study sought to provide more evidence on the role of anticipatory cognition in perceiving and reasoning about translation by examining these mechanisms in the context of audiovisual translation. A total of 51 subjects took part in this study and were recruited at the Institute of English Studies of the University of Łódź, like in Study 1. As part of the study, a 3-minute clip from the series “House of Cards” was screened. The English source material featured Polish subtitles. The subtitles were adapted from an authentic translation assignment to feature unambiguous deficiencies such as a typo (“Toyota Camry” rendered as “Toyota Carmy”), but – commensurately with the target product evaluated in Study 1 – were not flawed in a blatant manner that could make the subjects’ assessment task overly straightforward or one-sided.

Analogously to the task in Study 1, participants were instructed to express their perception of the translation following the 7-item format and to provide their estimation of the monetary value of the translator’s work. As was the case in Study 1, subjects responded in three conditions with a manipulation of information about the translator. The results are presented in the following sections.

### **4.2 Results**

#### **ENJOYMENT**

For all the questions in Study 2 replies were collected from 51 participants, 17 in the amateur condition, 18 in the neutral condition and 16 in the professional condition. For enjoyment estimation, the mean scores in the three conditions are 5.82 (amateur), 5.13 (professional) and 5.67 (neutral). The differences between results are not statistically significant in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

#### **CLOSENESS TO THE ST**

The mean assessment in this category is 5.82 for the amateur condition, 5.69 for the professional condition, and 5.67<sup>5</sup> for the neutral condition. There are no statistically significant differences between conditions in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

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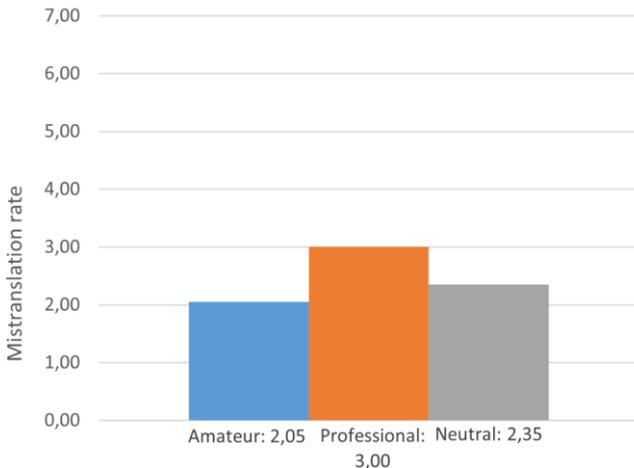
<sup>5</sup> Coincidentally, we observe a curious overlap in mean values between scores from this question and the previous one in the amateur and neutral conditions. Despite the overlap in mean scores, there is no overlap in individual scores provided by participants for these two questions. Otherwise, it could be argued that all the subjects simply selected the same scores for the two questions, which would question the reliability of the results.

### OMISSION RATE

Like in Study 1, this and the following question were formulated in such a way that the lower the score, the higher the subject's assessment of quality in these particular categories of product perception. For this question, the mean scores are: 2.53 (amateur), 2.94 (professional), and 2.67 (neutral). The cross-condition differences between results are not statistically significant in the two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

### MISTRANSLATION RATE

The mean scores in this category are 2.05, 3.0 and 2.28 for the amateur, professional and neutral conditions.



**FIGURE 4.**

We find that the difference between the amateur and professional conditions is significant at  $p < .05$  with  $p = .03$  in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test ( $U$ -value = 75.5,  $Z$ -Score = -2.16131). Subjects in the professional condition estimated the rate of mistranslation to be higher than subjects in the amateur translation. This finding – in part analogous to one of the differences identified in Study 1 (see section 3.2.5.) – could be counter-intuitive and is further addressed in section 5 below. Other cross-condition comparisons show no statistically confirmed difference.

### OVERALL QUALITY

When it comes to the subjects' overall assessment of subtitling quality, the mean scores are 5.35, 5.31 and 5.28 for the amateur, professional and amateur conditions. There are not any statistically corroborated differences between these results in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ .

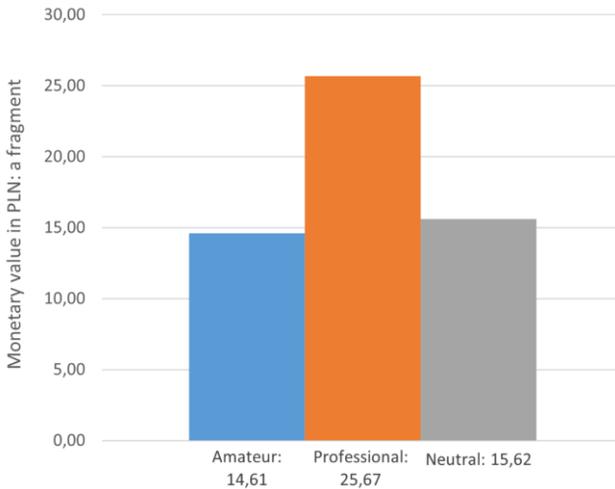
### THE MONETARY VALUE OF TRANSLATION ASSIGNMENTS

In parallel to Study 1, the table below presents participants' remuneration suggestions for subtitling the clip they watched and for a 50-minute episode of the show.

amateur		professional		neutral	
fragment	episode	fragment	episode	fragment	episode
25	200	25	1250	20	100
10	60	10	200	5	50
3	45	15	50	10	100
10	-	50	400	20	200
5	50	10	80	30	100
10	200	5	40	20	250
10	50	25	350	15	300
10	100	50	700	14	40
25	150	20	200	30	300
20	160	30	300	5	40
20	200	25	150	3	50
40	150	20	250	20	200
6,5	40	50	500	15	150
10	200	20	300	15	150
		30	200	10	200
				20	150
				13,5	225

**TABLE 4. The remuneration estimates suggested for the translation of the assessed fragment and a full episode, expressed in PLN**

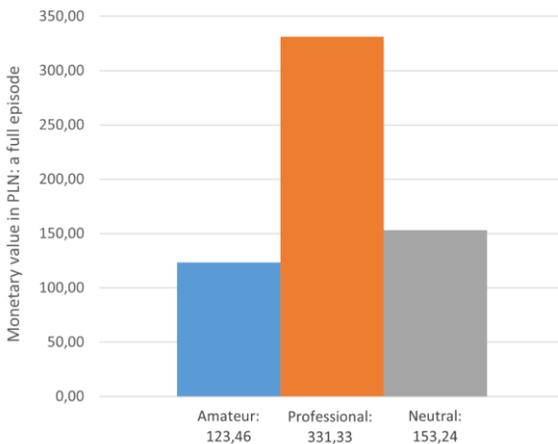
When it comes to the fragment that the subjects watched, the mean remuneration estimation amounts to 14.61, 25.67 and 15.62 in the amateur, professional and neutral condition, respectively, as showed in Figure 5.



**FIGURE 5.**

There are statistically confirmed differences in two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test at  $p < .05$ . First, we get significant results between the amateur and professional conditions with  $p = .01596$  (U-value = 54. Z-Score = -2.40573). Second, the difference is also significant between the neutral and professional conditions with  $p = .0226$  (U-value = 71.5, Z-Score = -2.27777). We therefore see that subjects in the professional condition valued the translator's output higher than both subjects in the amateur and neutral conditions. This divergence is additionally underscored by the fact that the difference between the amateur condition and the neutral condition is not statistically significant.

As showed in Figure 6, the corresponding mean values for producing subtitles of analogous quality for the complete episode are 123.46 (amateur condition), 331.33 (professional condition) and 153.24 (neutral condition).



**FIGURE 6.**

Like in the case above, the comparison of mean values in full-episode remuneration estimations shows no statistically confirmed difference between the amateur and

neutral condition. However, once more we find statistically confirmed differences between the amateur and professional condition, with  $p = .012$  (U-value = 42.5, Z-Score = 2.51056), and between the neutral and professional condition, with  $p = .0394$  (U-value = 72.5, Z-Score = -2.05807). The ‘full-episode’ results therefore mirror what was found for the ‘fragment’ estimations, with the professional condition guiding reasoners to value the output highest.

#### **4.3 Study 2: summary of findings**

An overview of scores from the three conditions shows that there are some statistically confirmed differences, and they are distributed across the categories differently from what was the case in Study 1. When it comes to the categories employing Likert-type scale, the problem of mistranslation is seen as significantly more serious in the professional condition than in the amateur condition. Then, contrary to what was found in Study 1, for the monetary estimations in Study 2 differences are significant in a total of four condition pairs, i.e. the professional condition yields significantly higher valuations than both amateur and neutral condition and this happened consistently in the case of the short clip and a full episode alike. What is more, similarly to what was found in Study 1, there is considerable variation in the monetary estimates ranging from 3 PLN to 50 PLN for the fragment and from 40 PLN to 1250 PLN for an episode<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly, while these results could be taken to indicate a low level of confidence, we do not see many subjects who choose not to provide their price, which was the case in Study 1.

### **5. Discussion**

#### **5.1 Explaining and contextualizing the results**

An interesting pattern emerges from the comparison of statistically confirmed differences between conditions and question types between Study 1 and Study 2. When it comes to the different faces of quality perception, we see statistically corroborated differences in Study 1 – for assessment of the degree of “omission” and “mistranslation”. What is more, in Study 1 we also find statistical confirmation of the difference in the overall assessment of quality across conditions. On the other hand, we do not observe such differences in the case of the subjects’ financial judgment in Study 1. We do see it in Study 2 where the expectation cues succeed in shaping estimations. On the other hand, in Study 2 in only one case is there a statistically confirmed difference when it comes to the other aspects of translation quality perception. It is found in the “mistranslation” category. Notably the difference between conditions in the case of this category was also found in Study 1. While the data makes it hardly possible to argue that there is something particular about mistranslation that makes subjects’ judgment more malleable than for the other categories, this is a good starting point for further investigation.

The guiding idea behind the design of the experiments was that pre-task information about professional authorship will trigger more positive expectations (e.g. of higher translation quality) than information about amateur authorship, which would then be reflected in significantly higher scores for the relevant criteria. This

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<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it should not go unnoticed that some subjects seem not to have given their remuneration estimations enough thought. This is evident where a subject states that the 3-minute clip is ‘worth’ 5 PLN and then estimates the full episode, which is some 16 times longer, at 15 PLN. While time is an imperfect metric here, it is still used, e.g. by subtitling companies, and – at least in the absence of other indicators – could be used to produce estimations that are not excessively out of proportion.

hypothesis is confirmed by the findings in Study 1 on at least three occasions, as we see that:

- a) the amateur translation is seen to display a higher omission rate than professional translation
- b) the professional translation is seen to display a lower mistranslation rate than translation whose author is undisclosed
- c) the professional translation is seen to be of higher overall quality than translation whose author is undisclosed

However, in Study 1 for the category of overall translation quality we find that amateur translation is evaluated higher than translation without specified authorship. This pattern is reproduced and even strengthened in Study 2 where professional subtitles are evaluated to be characterized by mistranslation more than amateur subtitles. These two results confirm our hypothesis insofar as expectations are indeed found to influence perception. However, what is unexpected is the direction of the effect which has to be considered beside the effect's robustness. A viable interpretation of these results is that in this case the participants' knowledge about the amateur character of the translation might have served as a mitigating consideration that the participants factored in, thus being more lenient in their assessment. Further experiments could use other expectation-generating manipulations to gain a better understanding of how the direction of the effect depends on the manipulation.

Another major finding is that expectations seem to influence product perception more in the case of written translation than audiovisual translation, which is suggested by a greater number of significant differences in Study 1 than in Study 2. One explanatory hypothesis is that perception in AVT is less malleable because of the semiotic richness of audiovisual stimuli with language – which is essentially what participants reflect on in our studies – embedded as one component, compared to a monosemiotic setup of written translation. In the latter case language features more prominently as there are no other relevant stimuli to attend to. Another way to explain the different findings from Study 1 and Study 2 is to think of the experience our participants are likely to have had in the respective tasks, i.e. evaluating written translation and evaluating subtitling. While providing a qualitative or quantitative analysis of this sort goes beyond the scope of the current paper, it could realistically be expected that our participants had had more experience with the latter, even if only because it can be done naturally as they watch subtitled material, as opposed to the former where one does not have the source text readily available every time one reads a translated text. If that were the case, we could argue that it is the greater amount of prior experience with evaluating audiovisual translation that is conducive to decreased malleability of judgment.

As the findings indicate that expectations have the potential to guide perception in the domain of translation, they are in accord with findings from other domains. For example, in a publication dating back to 1981 Nevid found that leading subjects to believe they were tasting higher or lower-status brand of water influenced their perceptions of quality, while no such significant difference was found when subjects were not cued. Likewise, Klaaren et al. (1994) found that affective expectations linked to an experience such as a vacation or a film screening have a bearing on how the quality of those experiences is evaluated. Kihlberg et al. (2005) tested how much individuals liked different varieties of bread, finding that product information (e.g. about health effects or the origin of flour used) could influence consumer liking. Lee et al. (2006) ran a beer-tasting experiment in which pub patrons tried either standard beer or beer with a little balsamic vinegar. The expectation-inducing information about the curious ingredient was disclosed either before or after tasting showing that lower expectations produced lower assessment. A fair amount of pertinent research

has been done into wine. For instance, in the study by Siegrist and Cousin (2009) information about an expert's evaluation of a wine offered before the tasting influenced assessment while analogous input provided after the tasting had no effect. In turn, Morrot et al. (2001) demonstrated a cross-modal illusion whereby subjects described the odor of white wine as that of red wine when it was misleadingly colored with an odorless substance.

It is noteworthy that not only various experiential domains have been explored but also different types of evidence have been presented to support the idea that anticipatory cognition plays an important role in decision-making. In that sense, for example, McLure et al. (2004) reported that cuing the consumer about the brand name of a drink (Coca-Cola and Pepsi) influenced preference, as supported by both behavioral and neural responses.

Given the wide range of very appealing studies demonstrating how expectations can bear on experiences and decisions (see also Section 2), it is clear that analogous or opposing evidence from the domain of translation remains to be produced. As this paper aspires to advance in that direction, it will be highly productive, both theoretically as well as practically (e.g. in the didactic sense), to further test how much receiving target products, reasoning about translations and making translation decisions displays cognitive patterns commensurate with those identified elsewhere.

## **5.2 Methodological considerations**

It should be pointed out that while what the category 'regular' or 'average' denotes when it comes to audiences is going to be fuzzy, the subjects in the studies reported in this paper are not the prototypical receptors, statistically speaking. Given their linguistic background, and especially their source language proficiency coupled with the very fact that they had the source texts available for ST-TT comparison – which would not typically be the case for a translation of a review – the fact that their perception was malleable to a fairly large extent could indicate that more prototypically 'regular' readers or viewers will be influenced more significantly. A further argument is that the results reported here come from a controlled experiment which requires us to factor in ecological validity. An important methodological note is that the presented evidence indicates it is possible to shape the participants' judgment in experimental conditions, i.e. in a situation that is qualitatively different from their normal experience of reading a text or watching a subtitled film, and which could therefore recruit additional cognitive resources to be used for principled critical examination which should then make reasoning less malleable.

Also, it should be kept in mind that the manipulation used in the studies, in the form of a sentence-long piece of information given after the instruction, might not be fully reliable. There is no knowing how deeply participants processed that fragment. Yet, that this slight manipulation nonetheless effected significant differences between conditions could additionally support the argument about the important role of expectations in reasoning about translations. On the whole, then, these methodological caveats suggest that the reported effect could be more robust in non-experimental settings.

## **6. Conclusions and further research**

By looking into the interaction of receptors' (readers' as well viewers') expectations and translation reception, this paper has attempted to shed light on the broader question which is about the extent to which human judgment relies on intrinsic properties of what is judged and to what extent judgment is shaped by external factors.

The two studies discussed here offer evidence that in the case of the translation product even subtle linguistic cues (cf. Fausey, Boroditsky, 2010; Fausey, Matlock,

2011; Tan Ai Lin, 2019) can effectively influence aspects of reception. At the same time, it has been demonstrated that the effect of expectations is not uniform across translation types, as showed by the differences in results between written translation and audiovisual translation.

Further research into the nature of links between expectations and target text reception needs to test professional proofreaders and post-editors. It would be very interesting to see to what extent and on what criteria their assessment could be swayed, if at all. Clearly, a way to minimize the effects described in this paper could be to implement a standardized translation quality assessment instrument like the MQM-DQF harmonized metric, the models developed for interlingual subtitling (Pedersen, 2017) or interlingual live subtitling (Romero-Fresco, Pöchhacker, 2017). Leaving aside some methodological issues that are invariably going to appear when such models are proposed and then implemented, using a formalized set of translation evaluation criteria, useful and sometimes necessary as it is, will typically not be dealing with parameters such as enjoyment. At the same time such less parametrizable criteria will be of much importance from the vantage point of viewers and, by the same token, filmmakers, distributors or streaming service providers.

These findings could therefore eventually feed into translation workflows. Currently, their greatest practical potential appears to lie in informing translator training practices by highlighting the need to sensitize trainees to how malleable reasoning about target texts can be, as a first step to minimizing the effects where they are undesirable. Similarly, from the perspective of the translator trainer, a critical question is about the role of anticipatory cognition in trainee output assessment. It would then be interesting to extend this question beyond translation to focus on assessment in other educational settings, with one likely type of interaction being the assessment of language learners' linguistic performance vis-à-vis rater expectations.

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*Words: 7782*

*Characters: 49 787 (27,66 standard pages)*

Assoc. prof. Mikołaj Deckert  
University of Łódź, Institute of English Studies  
Pomorska 171/173, 90-236 Łódź,  
Poland  
mikołaj.deckert@uni.lodz.pl