

## **Analysis of the development of legal translation competence and expertise**

Many people, including lawyers, underestimate the complexity of legal translation. Even the trainees who enrol in courses in legal translation often do not realize the challenge they set for themselves. Legal translators, to do their job well, need extensive knowledge about two legal systems, which have evolved independently, their legal concepts, which are often incompatible between different systems, and the legal languages used in both legal cultures. They have to first learn to notice problems and then to solve them in a way that does not mislead the recipients of translated documents, because any errors in legal texts may have serious consequences.

The knowledge and skills that translators need have been described in many models of translation competence, including four models of legal translation competence. But since these models are increasingly concerned with procedural knowledge, or knowing how to work, the notion of expertise, borrowed from cognitive psychology, started to be used in translation studies and there has been much research on elements of general translation expertise. There have been some surprising findings, for instance that translation does not necessarily become easier with experience, because translators recognize more problems, analyse them qualitatively and are more aware of the possibility of making errors. It has also been found that translation expertise needs to be adaptive, as no two translation tasks are the same. However, less is known about legal translation expertise in legal translation studies the focus was more on texts than on their translators.

The proposed research project aims to identify the elements of legal translation expertise and the course of its development. It includes examining the differences between how legal translator trainees and more experienced legal translators work, by means of a detailed analysis of recordings of their translation processes. It also seeks to determine whether and how the process changes in the span of a month or a month and a half when the trainees attend a course in legal translation. Finally, the aim is also to compare how good the results of these translation processes are, by evaluating the translated documents (short contracts). To get a better picture of the quality of translations, they will be evaluated by two legal translators and two lawyers, who will look for both errors and good solutions. In each contract, 10+ potentially problematic words or expressions have been selected during pilot studies and particular attention will be paid to those items. However, it is also likely that not all changes in the working methods will translate into higher quality of the translated texts.

It is hoped that the research will help pinpoint the changes that correspond to the development of legal translation expertise. Pilot studies have shown, for instance, that the range of online information sources used by trainees changes from sources of ready-made answers (such as bilingual dictionaries) towards more sources of information enabling them to better understand the source text or to better express the message in the target text. They also start grouping together similar tasks, which means less switching between the document they work on and the Internet browser where they look for information. However, more data are needed to observe more changes or to make any generalizations.

The research data will be analysed statistically to establish any meaningful relationships between them. Where possible, they will also be compared with findings from a survey for experienced legal translators where they were asked about how they perceive their own professional development. It is hoped that the results will help enrich the picture of legal translation expertise, establish if it differs from general translation expertise, and finally perhaps provide insights into how best to train future legal translators.