

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Westminster		
Unit of Assessment: 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Changes to translator training and assessment practices in higher education institutions and professional contexts		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: June 2015 – December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Elsa Huertas Barros Juliet Vine	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer Senior Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2009 ongoing; 2008 ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2015 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Dr Huertas Barros and Vine's research into translation and interpreting (T&I) training has produced findings aimed at improving pedagogy and assessment that have been put into practice in the UK and beyond by a range of translation stakeholders. Impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct changes to the assessment practice of commercial translation companies; • enhancing industry understanding of the nature of the trained workforce (sharing detailed insights into academic provision and practice); • enhancing translation assessment practice across UK higher education institutions (HEI) via the first survey of such provision in this sector; • extending this impact to translator training in Spain. 		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) With the spread of competence-based approaches to translator training, a need has arisen for empirical studies of the extent to which this pedagogical approach is being incorporated in teaching, learning, and assessment on translation courses in HEI. Identifying assessment practice as a valuable lens through which to view current understandings of translation pedagogy, Huertas Barros and Vine undertook a case study of tutors' (n=16) perceptions and use of summative assessment on the MA translation modules at the University of Westminster [1]. In doing so they redressed the lack of empirical studies on assessment practices and, more broadly, the lack of research relating assessment practices in translator education to wider HE debates on assessment. The survey results highlighted the need for assessment instruments and marking criteria to more explicitly reflect the skills demands of the commercial translation market (the majority of tutors surveyed worked in both HEI and industry); for such assessment criteria to be better clarified; and for assessments to encompass not only the end product but the translation process also.</p> <p>Seeking to test the practical application of their findings, the results of Huertas Barros and Vine's study were used as a basis for consultation and discussion with the MA teaching staff at Westminster, and this foundational research resulted in the remodelling of assessment practices in the core translation modules via the development of new criteria and a revamped feedback sheet, as well as changes in the weighting of assessments. In light of the changes implemented, Huertas Barros and Vine undertook a study of the broader learning community to assess the efficacy of these changes, surveying both the MA tutors (n=16) and the cohort of students (n=53) on their perceptions of the marking criteria and assessment patterns [2]. Through this second empirical study, Huertas Barros and Vine identified the importance of effectively integrating assessment literacy into course design, finding that fuller understanding of the criteria and processes involved in assessing translation will both raise assessment standards and better equip learners with the ability to objectively assess the quality of translation in their own work and that of others. By demonstrating how the construction of assessment standards can be enhanced through direct engagement with learning communities (both tutors and students), the methodology and findings of this research into changes at their own institution constituted an informed proposal for best practice in translation training across the broader sector, which Huertas Barros and Vine would take forward through the activities described in Section 4.</p> <p>Outputs [1] and [2] were central to the University of Westminster's successful application for European Masters in Translation (EMT) status in June 2019, with Westminster being one of only 5 institutions to have more than one MA course awarded EMT status. The assessment</p>		

instruments, tasks, and criteria of the core translation modules of both of the awarded MA courses were redesigned on the basis of the findings of these outputs, demonstrating the value of this research to actionable assessment practice.

In carrying out background research for their survey of the assessment practices at Westminster, the researchers found that, although there had been a rapid increase in programmes offering translation and interpreting training, there was no research into how this training was being offered. The next phase of their research project was thus to investigate assessment practices across the UK HEI sector. Huertas Barros and Vine undertook, for the first time, a review of all 27 MA Translation courses offered by UK universities and investigated the extent to which competence-based approaches and changes in the translation market are actually informing assessment practice on the core translation modules of such courses [3]. In regard to competence-based approaches, the research revealed a diverse range of practices encompassing learning outcomes, assessment instruments and tasks, and assessment criteria. It also revealed unifying trends in the response from UK universities to market changes and new pedagogical approaches to translation. The data collected from the survey was analysed using the concept of 'fit for purpose' and the six tenets of assessment set out by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in its paper 'A Marked Improvement: Transforming Assessment' (2012), as reaffirmed in 'The case for transforming assessment in higher education' (2016). Huertas Barros and Vine's analysis indicates that the use of translation competence as a pedagogical model increases the probability that assessment practices are fit for purpose, and that there is a need to increase awareness of all the HEA tenets of assessment and, particularly, assessment literacy (outputs [2], [3], [4]).

One of the aims of the above research was to provide an overview of practices and changes in practices that could inform individual universities in their designing of assessment and courses. This has been built upon by Huertas Barros and Vine in their most recent research, which recommends ways to embed the tenets of assessment, especially assessment literacy, into module design and delivery. By introducing a case study on module design with a collaborative transcreation (the translation of advertising material for use in a different cultural and/or linguistic environment) project at its core, the researchers were able to identify a set of concepts that can be applied to the curricular needs of translation trainers in order to future proof students in the changing employment market [4].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [1] Huertas Barros, E. and Vine, J. (2016). Translator Trainers' Perceptions of Assessment: An Empirical Study. In: Thelen, M., van Egdome, G.W., Verbeeck, D., et al., (eds.) *Translation and Meaning. New Series*. Vol. 41 Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang. pp. 29-39.
- [2] Huertas Barros, E. and Vine, J. (2019). Constructing Standards in Communities: Tutors' and Students' Perceptions of Assessment Practices on an MA Translation Course. In: Huertas Barros, E., Vandepitte, S. and Iglesias Fernández, E., (eds.) *Quality Assurance and Assessment Practices in Translation and Interpreting. Advances in Linguistics and Communication Studies Series*. Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Global, pp. 245-269.
- [3] Huertas Barros, E., and Vine, J. (2018). Current Trends on MA Translation Courses in the UK: Changing Assessment Practices on Core Translation Modules. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*. In Huertas Barros and Vine, (eds.) Special Issue 'New Perspectives in Assessment in Translator Training', 12(1). pp. 5-24. *Both this article and the edited volume itself was externally double-blind peer reviewed. Recognising its significance, Routledge republished this special issue in book form: Huertas Barros, E. and Vine, J., (eds.). New Perspectives on Assessment in Translator Education. London: Routledge, 2019.*
- [4] Huertas Barros, E. and Vine, J. (2019). Training the Trainers in Embedding Assessment Literacy into Module Design: A Case Study of a Collaborative Transcreation Project. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*. 13(3). pp. 271-291.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

4.1 Changes to practice in the translation industry

Huertas Barros and Vine adapted the components of best practice identified in their research into adoptable techniques for embedding into an industry context. The researchers then organised and led a joint academia and industry workshop (June 2017) for 25 stakeholders which **provided**

practical methods for enhancing translator competence and quality assessment, emphasising the importance of the process of translation to the success of the product.

Follow up testimony collected two years after the workshop has recorded Huertas Barros and Vine’s direct impact on these industry stakeholders’ practices. These changes – and their related benefits – are outlined in the table below.

Stakeholder: [Translator Training](#), an online training provider which has helped more than 1000 students take a professional qualification in translation and employs 45 tutors from industry and education. The following testimony is from the Course Director at Translator Training [a1].

Changes due to the workshop	Benefit of these changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “reviewed our provision of feedback and attendant documentation. After consultation with key staff I decided to make specific changes in line with the ideas discussed at the workshop, to the wording of our feedback sheet, which is provided by translation tutors to students on the distance learning course”; the feedback sheet “included further explanation and contextualisation” e.g. Performance Aspects were given definitions, Error Categories were “updated to facilitate a reflective post-analysis on the part of the student”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “help[s] both teachers and students in analysing areas needing more attention”; “the diagrammatic/visual layout enables both teachers and students to ‘see’ and chart progress. This can then provide an important starting point for discussion in telephone tutorials or Skype sessions”.

Stakeholder: [Hogarth Worldwide](#), a leading marketing consultancy firm with over 4,000 employees across 28 cities worldwide that provides language services to clients, including transcreation. The following testimony is from an Account Director at Hogarth Worldwide [a2].

Changes due to the workshop	Benefit of these changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “created a specific client relevant translation test for new freelance translators. These tests are assessed using our ‘Translator Performance Review Tool’ by our existing specialised and trusted translators”; “introduced the Translator Training Pack which is now sent to all new translators”, consisting of client relevant facets: brand background and company profile; glossary in local language; style guide for local language; reference materials; “introduced a new approach when it comes to provid[ing] feedback to our translators. After each project, we share client feedback with the talents when relevant”; “introduced a periodic assessment in case of an internal complaint or in case of an external complaint (from other talent or client)”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “before joining our database, all our translators are fully vetted to test their writing skills and subject matter expertise. Only the best are selected”; “make[s] sure there is consistency across the account and avoid numerous emails to Project managers asking for guidelines on the above subjects”; “the translators get familiar with the style and terminology requested by the client [...] avoiding future changes or complaints from the client”; “keep[s] our database always updated with the best talents by stopping any collaboration with those talents that do not meet our quality requirements”.

Stakeholder: [Deluxe Media](#), a world leading video creation company, encompassing the production of subtitle files for digital cinema releases. The following testimony is from the Team Lead at Deluxe Media [a3].

Changes due to the workshop	Benefit of these changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “gave rise to thinking about how to achieve more quality in the quality control team [...] at the time, I had little direct experience with translator or translation quality evaluation”; “putting in place regular group feedback sessions on client rejections and proactive work quality monitoring”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “the awareness of quality procedures and the use of software has been raised and the number of rejections for obvious errors has decreased” partly because of strategies stimulated by the workshop.

The impact of the researchers' work – through output [3] and the surveys described below – has also extended to further language service providers within industry via the Association of Translation Companies (ATC); the language sector's leading professional body in the UK. The researchers were commissioned to produce an in-depth industry briefing informed by the data collected in their surveys to **enable language service providers to better understand the nature of the trained workforce**. The ATC's CEO states: "The briefing was welcomed by the ATC and the language service companies it represents, as it provided up-to-date insights into the academic provision undertaken by current and future staff members and freelancers employed or commissioned by the ATC. [...] These insights help direct further on-the-job training needs, and form a solid basis for understanding new candidates' academic backgrounds" [a4]. The detailed industry briefing authored by Huertas Barros and Vine [a5] was published on the ATC website on Dec 1 2020 and was promoted in the ATC Newsletter December 2020 [a6], reaching "some 3,500 language services industry recipients" [a4].

4.2 Impact on Translator Training within UK Higher Education

The President of the Association of Programmes in Translation and Interpreting Studies in the UK and Ireland (APTIS) explains that Huertas Barros and Vine's 2015 UK-wide survey on assessment practices on MA T&I programmes, which underpinned output [3] above, "was an important undertaking that **made many T&I colleagues across the UK realise the importance of looking at the specifics of translator training provision in the UK**. Their research into T&I provision and the different approaches to translator training in the UK also **acted as a platform through which colleagues have been able to share and inform good practice**" [b1].

In this way, Huertas Barros and Vine's survey stimulated improvements in T&I across the UK, and these impacts were **consolidated by the formation of APTIS in response to the survey** having highlighted the need for a peer-support network of T&I researchers: "This first survey coincided with and contributed to the desire for T&I programmes in the UK to collaborate more closely in order to be in position to face the many challenges facing translator training. To this end, my colleague Dr Castro (Warwick University) and I set about creating an association for T&I programmes in the UK in 2016" [b1]. This association of 24 HEIs works "to improve the quality of learning and teaching as well as research on translation and interpreting programmes at Higher Education institutions" through knowledge exchange amongst members via newsletters, webinars, a forum, and an annual conference [b2].

To this end, the President states APTIS invited Huertas Barros and Vine "to present their cutting-edge research on translation assessment in a dedicated Workshop at our first annual conference (APTIS 2018, Aston University)", delivered to representatives of 15 HEI institutions [b1]. The President adds: "Based on their research, this workshop was extremely successful in **challenging participants' views on assessment on T&I programmes** and will no doubt have had an impact on the way colleagues think about the assessment strategy on their own translator training programmes" [b1].

At the third annual Conference in Nov 2019, APTIS officially endorsed Huertas Barros and Vine's proposed second iteration of the survey of UK university programmes, this time encompassing 30 institutions [b3]. As 5 years had passed since the first survey, the April 2020 follow-up survey provided richer data reflecting the last 10 years of T&I training and captured changes in HEI and in the related industry (employers of the trained students), thus providing an opportunity for educators across the UK to share their best practice and to therefore identify and adopt improvements as found in the practice of others. As the President of APTIS confirms, the researchers' "initial survey was so **useful to APTIS in gathering and disseminating information about existing T&I courses (and, therefore, informing best practice)** that we decided to officially support the second iteration of the survey" [b1].

4.3 Impact on Translator Training in Spain

The above impacts created through Huertas Barros and Vine's surveys and related outputs have also extended into Spain via the "Evaluation in the Acquisition of Translation Competence" (EACT) project, which aims to establish evaluation procedures for different levels of acquisition of translation competence and is led by Procés d'Adquisició de la Competència Traductora i

Avaluació ([PACTE](#)); a world-leading research group in translation training comprising academics from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

According to the EACT Principal Researcher, the project's first phase "is a replication of Huertas Barros' and Vine's (2016, 2018, 2019) objective but in the context of translation training in Spain" [c1]. As such, Huertas Barros was engaged as an external consultant with "a key role in the design" of the EACT survey of BA Translation programmes in Spain, for which "Huertas Barros and Vine's surveys [...] served as a basis" [c1].

Huertas Barros provided advice "in terms of its structure, sections and content as well as the methodological design, including the survey items and response scales, and a first internal validation test of the survey" [c1]. Her engagement resulted in the reorganisation of questions, their rewording to avoid ambiguity, the narrowing of their scope, and the replication of 12 questions that had been included in Huertas Barros and Vine's own surveys [c1].

The impact of this EACT survey, finalised in July 2020, replicates that of the one undertaken in the UK. The survey provides insight into the current assessment practices in translation training programmes in Spain and **enables identification of the main issues and gaps that need to be addressed to improve translation training and students' learning experience**, specifically in relation to assessment practices. As such, the survey results "benefit students and tutors given their direct application to translation training material and curriculum design" and also benefits "translators and translation companies by informing guidelines for quality control in translation practice" [c1].

The impact of this intervention on the work of PACTE is that the survey outcomes are **vital to their creation of "standardised evaluation procedures" that will validate the accuracy and appropriateness of pioneering competence descriptors** [c1]. Previously established in their "Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence" ([NACT](#)) project, upon which EACT builds, these competence descriptors provided, for the first time, translation competence levels that function as equivalents to the widely used A-C Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ensuring the quality of translation by enabling consistency between universities and service providers.

Huertas Barros and Vine were part of the [panel](#) of external expert advisors for the 2015-2018 NACT project, with the former providing consultancy on the initial proposed framework of competence levels [c2]. Both then took part in the appraisal of the revised competence framework by evaluating the appropriateness of each category and proposed level, as well as the text genres associated with each category and their level of progression. The researchers also evaluated and advised on the main abilities and requirements of the different levels [c3].

Huertas Barros and Vine thus significantly contributed to both NACT and EACT, the success of which has enabled PACTE to access a €253,280 EU grant for a project that will provide final validation for these descriptors and result in such standardisation in translation training: "[EFFORT](#): Towards a European Framework of Reference for Translation".

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [a] (1) Testimony: Course Director at Translator Training (2) Testimony: Account Director at Hogarth Worldwide; (3) Testimony: Team Lead at Deluxe Media; (4) Testimony: CEO of ATC; (5) Huertas Barros and Vine, "Industry briefing on a Survey of Assessment Practices on MA Translation Programmes", ATC [link](#); (6) ATC Newsletter Dec 2020
- [b] (1) Testimony: President of APTIS; (2) APTIS website [link](#); (3) Minutes of the APTIS AG meeting
- [c] (1) Testimony: Principal Researcher of PACTE group; (2) NACT, "Modifications introduced to Preliminary Proposal" (3) NACT Assessment Report