

# Translation Tutors' Assessment Perceptions and Practices: Results from the EACT Project

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**EACT research group**

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- ▶ Studies focusing on the **evaluation of translation competence** have become increasingly more prominent in the last two decades (e.g. Conde Ruano, 2009; Domínguez Araújo, 2015; Huertas Barros & Vine, 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Hurtado Albir & Pavani, 2018).
- ▶ **Progress on assessment instruments and tasks**, with alternative proposals instead of the traditional translation task (e.g. Adab, 2000; Martínez & Hurtado Albir, 2001; Orozco & Hurtado Albir, 2002; Kelly, 2005; Galán-Mañas & Hurtado Albir, 2015; Hurtado Albir, 2015a, 2015b; Hurtado & Olalla-Soler, 2016).
- ▶ **Rubrics for assessing students' work** both formatively and summatively (e.g. Angelelli & Jacobson, 2009; Presas, 2012; Hurtado Albir, 2015; Pavani, 2016; Galán-Mañas 2016; Hurtado Albir & Pavani, 2018).

- ▶ Despite the increasing number of research studies on assessment of translation competence over the past decade (e.g. Conde Ruano, 2009; Domínguez Araújo, 2015; Pavani, 2016; Huertas Barros & Vine, 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Haro Soler, 2018), **empirical research remains scarce and there is a need for more objective assessment criteria and a wider range of tasks**
  
- ▶ **Study 1:** Description of the current trends in assessment practices on undergraduate degrees in TI in Spain
  
- ▶ Aims:
  - **To investigate** tutors' assessment perceptions and practices
  - **To collect** data on assessment procedures & practices used on practical translation modules (e.g. assessment criteria, type of tasks, use of grading scales, rubrics)
  - **To identify** current issues and main challenges on translation evaluation

► **Quantitative and qualitative methods**

- Data collection on existing empirical studies on the assessment of translation competence
- **Survey-based case study** conducted as a part of the research project EACT on assessment practices in practical translation modules on undergraduate translation programmes in Spain.
- Survey completed by **97 translation tutors** from **five Spanish universities** (UAB, 25%; UGR, 20.7%; UJI, 14.1%; UPV/EHU and Uvigo, 25%)
- Tutors teaching **from or into any of the four official languages in Spain** (Spanish, Catalan, Galician, and Basque) in any of their four-year translation degrees
- This presentation focuses on our **main findings on tutors' assessment perceptions and practices on undergraduate translation modules.**

- ▶ Importance granted by tutors to assessment
- ▶ Assessment of the translation process vs. the translation product
- ▶ Assessment procedures and text selection
- ▶ Formative assessment
- ▶ Assessment based on professional translation practice
- ▶ Assessment tools: use of grading scales and rubrics
- ▶ Changes and refinements to assessment criteria and tasks
- ▶ Tutors' satisfaction with assessment practices
- Closed multiple-choice or single-answer questions based on a **4-point Likert scale**

- ▶ How important do you think assessment is in your teaching activity as a whole?

N = 97	
Mean	3.56
Standard deviation	0.558
Median	4

- ▶ Participants attach considerable importance to assessment overall
- ▶ Interpreted with caution, as tutors taking part in this survey are likely to have a special interest in translator education in general and assessment in particular

	Most important aspects to evaluate the level of translation competence	
	Product	Process
Mean	3.51	3.49
Cases		
According to the competences being assessed	78.7 %	73.7 %
According to the year of the degree programme	59.6 %	60 %
In the case of specialized translation	44.7 %	54.7 %
In the case of general translation	41.5 %	43.2 %
In the case of direct translation	39.4 %	40 %
In the case of inverse translation	27.7 %	34.7 %
According to the language pair	18.1 %	26.3 %
Other cases	1.1 %	2.1 %

► Most participants attach the **same importance** to the translation product (mean 3.51) as the translation process (mean 3.49).

⇒ Participants attach great importance to the **translation process** and consider this phase to be **vital** for producing a **high-quality translation**.

⇒ Participants' **awareness of translation assessment** in general and a **shift** from a focus on the product to a **focus on the translation process**.

⇒ Both the product and the process are considered a fundamental aspect for determining **students' level of translation competence**, particularly in the cases above.

Assessment procedures based on professional practice	
Mean	3.23
Median	3
Main cases	
According to the competences being assessed	70 %
According to the year of the degree programme	62.2 %
In the case of specialized translation	53.3 %
In the case of general translation	34.4 %
In the case of direct translation	28.9 %
In the case of inverse translation	23.3 %
According to the language pair	15.6 %
Other cases <sup>1</sup>	2.2%

### ► Criteria for text selection

- Appropriate **level of difficulty** (3.81)
  - **Relevance** of the text for the application of the competences being assessed (3.74)
  - **Authenticity** (similar to professional practice) (3.69)
  - Other (13.4%): text length (suited to allocated time); students' interest in the topic; text variety; translation problems students have dealt with; the source text not being available in the TL.
- ⇒ Tutors' awareness of the **importance** and impact that text selection has on assessment
- ⇒ A **learning-centred approach** in line with the importance tutors attach to the **process** when assessing translation competence
- ⇒ Will to build **bridges between academia and professional practice**



### ► Grading scale

- The use of grading scales is widely spread among the tutors (69.5% use them regularly and 21.1% use them occasionally).
- The vast majority use grading scales with assigned numerical values (80.2%)
  - ⇒ A desire to achieve more **objectivity** and **transparency** in the assessment process.
- 86% of tutors reward students for correct solutions in their grading scales
  - ⇒ Evolution from an error-based correction to a more student-centred, competence-based approach.
  - ⇒ Tutors' greater awareness of the impact assessment practices have on students' self-confidence
- Authorship: 72.9% of tutors use their own grading scale
- 55.1% use different grading scales depending on the module
- 40.7% use the same grading scale in all the modules they teach on

## ► Rubrics

- Rubrics are less widely used than grading scales.
- 69.1% of tutors claim to use them regularly (39.2%) or occasionally (29.9%).
- Tutors use different rubrics depending on the task being assessed (73.1%).
- 50.7% combine qualitative and quantitative rubrics.
- Tutors value rubrics very highly:
  - Greater transparency (3.67) and accuracy (3.51)
  - Help to identify those areas in which students need to improve (3.62)
  - Objectivity (3.46)
  - Motivation (3.30)
- Other benefits:
  - Useful in formative assessment (e.g. highlighting good solutions implemented by students)
  - Help to simplify assessment.
  - Make discussions on assessment easier between tutors and students

	Changes in the last 5 years	
	Assessment tasks	Assessment criteria
Yes	80.4 %	58.7 %
No	19.6 %	41.3 %
Reason for the change		
To better reflect how professional translators' work	68.5 %	70.4 %
To adapt to new approaches to teaching translation	58.9 %	70.4 %
To take advantage of changes in the software / resources available in my university	42.5 %	35.2 %
To adapt to changes in student numbers	35.6 %	33.3 %
Other reasons	12.3 %	11.1 %

- ⇒ Translation tutors are aware of the **importance of refreshing and refining** assessment practices on a regular basis.
- ⇒ Assessment **criteria tend to be more stable** than assessment tasks, with the latter being refined more frequently.
- ⇒ This is in line with their previous responses on assessment procedures and text selection.
- ⇒ Other reasons: standardising assessment criteria, reflecting students' competence level & students' progress.

Changes to assessment practices due to COVID-19	
No	56.5 %
Yes	43.5 %
Main changes	
Type of assessment tasks	70 %
Percentage assigned to each task	67.5 %
Allocated time for its completion	55 %
Increase in the number of assessment tasks	20 %
Reduction in the number of assessment tasks	20 %
Grading scale	12.5 %
Rubrics	10 %
Other changes	10 %

⇒ May be attributed to a lack of time for adapting assessments to online teaching, a lack of flexibility from universities or need to pretend to continue with “business as usual”

- Other changes:
  - Reduction in the length of assessed tasks
  - Shift towards continuous assessment

Satisfaction with assessment	
Mean	3.27
Median	3

⇒ Tutors highly satisfied with the assessment they carried out, but **satisfaction was not absolute.**

- Mainly attributed to four **factors**:
  - Using formative assessment (i.e. does not count towards the final mark) provides students with feedback (72.7%)
  - Using translation grading scales and rubrics provides a basis for assessing all students equally (69.3%)
  - Self-assessment and peer-assessment encourage students to reflect on what they have learned (65.9%)
  - Rubrics let students know what to expect and guarantee greater transparency (61.4%)

## ► Dissatisfaction

### ■ Two main factors:

- **Subjectivity** generally inherent to any assessment (71.4%)
- The **assignment of a numerical mark** (71.4%)

⇒ Need to refine assessment instruments, methods, and practices to make them more valid and reliable for students and tutors.

- Need for clearer, more coherent, and more explicit assessment criteria
- Need to embed assessment literacy into course design to ensure the reliability of professional judgment

### ■ Other reasons (57.1%):

- Lack of standardisation of the assessment procedures and criteria used by different tutors at the same institution.
- Difficulty involved in making the assessment process transparent.
- Difficulty involved in tailoring assessment owing to overly large groups.
- Heterogeneity of translation students (different levels of competence).
- Complex nature of translation (i.e. there can be various suitable solutions).
- Lack of teacher training in assessment.

- ▶ Assessment is a very important aspect of tutor's teaching and practice.
- ▶ Tutors attach practically the same importance to the translation process and the end product.
- ▶ Most respondents use different types of tasks depending on the competence(s) being assessed and the level of the module.
- ▶ The assessment procedures are in most cases based in professional practice.
- ▶ Assessment practices differ according to language directionality but not the language pair(s) involved.
- ▶ Source texts are mainly selected on the basis of authenticity, relevance for the competence being assessed, and an appropriate level of difficulty.
- ▶ Tutors use both grading scales and rubrics, with the former being the most common instrument.
- ▶ Most tutors revamp assessment tasks regularly, but assessment criteria are not revised as frequently.
- ▶ Tutors seem to be adapting to new realities and embedding new approaches into their teaching practice but have mixed feelings about their satisfaction with assessment methods.

- ▶ Description of the current trends in assessment practices on undergraduate degrees in TI in Spain bring to the fore the need to:
  - **Make progress** in objectivity and standardisation of assessment criteria and methods
  - **Create** assessment procedures and criteria to identify levels of performance
  - **Refine** assessment grading scales and rubrics
  - **Bring** the reality of professional practice closer to the classroom
  
- ⇒ Feeds directly into the design of assessment tasks for different levels of translation competence



¡THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR  
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