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Introduction to Special Issue 'New Perspectives in Assessment in Translator Training'

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Introduction

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This special issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* focuses on new perspectives in assessment in translator education and shows that assessment has gradually become seen as far more than just a grading exercise to establish that learning outcomes have been achieved. Assessment is shown to be not only a measure of learning (i.e. assessment 'of' learning), but also part of the learning process (i.e. assessment 'for' learning) (HEA 2012, 19). Focusing on assessment provides a fascinating mirror of the changes and debates that are occurring within translation pedagogy. As translator competence models have become widely accepted, the focus of training has been on acquisition of the competences and hence the processes that each competence involves. As such, new perspectives have emerged which question traditional forms of assessment, i.e. assessments of the product of the translation process are being questioned as to their ability to fully reflect the achievement of the learning outcomes predicated on a translator competence model of training. This questioning of traditional assessment practices has led to the development of a range of innovative assessment practices. In this issue, some of these innovations provide the basis for empirical research into their reliability and validity.

Another debate that is reflected in the changing approaches to assessment is how to bridge the gap between academia and the profession in both the skills being taught in universities and those required within the industry, and how to bridge the gap in assessment practices of both (e.g. Way 2009; Chouc and Calvo 2011; Calvo Encinas 2015; Schnell and Rodríguez 2017). These issues were addressed in the special issue 'Employability in the Translation and Interpreting Curriculum' (11[2–3] 2017) and are also raised in this volume.
Several of the processes mentioned in translator competence models require the translator to assess their own work and to be able to reflect on the translation choices they have made, for example the translation service provision competence in the EMT model (2009). The fact that self-assessment is an explicit learning object in competence-based models of translator training means that translation courses have begun to explore the use of self-assessment and how this can support students to become life-long and autonomous learners (Way 2008, 2015; Galán-Mañas and Hurtado Albir 2015). The value and use of self-assessment is covered in three of the papers in this issue.

The prevalence of debates on the value of self-assessment in translator and interpreter education demonstrates that the discipline is already discussing and developing the kind of assessment practices which are being called for across the Higher Education (HE) sector (Rust, Price, and O'Donovan 2003; Boud and Falchikov 2006; Boud and Associates 2010; Boud and Molloy 2013; HEA 2012; Elkington 2016) where assessment for learning is a key theme. The work already underway in this area, as exemplified by this special issue, could not only bridge the gap between professional and academic uses of assessment, but also bridge interdisciplinary divides and provide models of assessment practice that other disciplines may learn from.

In their contribution, Huertas Barros and Vine provide an overview of assessment practices on MA Translation courses offered in the UK. To this end, the authors have carried out a case study (n=27) exploring the learning outcomes, assessment instruments and assessment criteria on core translation modules to discover to what extend translator competence models have become embedded in assessment practices and whether new forms of assessment have been adopted on MAs in Translation in the UK. The study finds that along with a wide acceptance of translator competence models and their attendant focus of the process of translation, many UK universities are finding new ways of providing summative assessment.

It is just this type of new approach to summative assessment that Hurtado Albir and Pavani present in their exploratory case study. The authors propose a multidimensional summative assessment to replace the traditional forms of summative assessment. This case study was conducted with undergraduate students from the University of Bologna and demonstrates that, compared to traditional assessment (i.e. translation of a text under exam conditions), multidimensional summative assessment is a more detailed form of assessment which provides greater information about student's acquisition of translator competence and the achievement of learning objectives. The results also highlight the importance of self-assessment in ensuring that students are able to become autonomous learners and are thus able to continue developing their translator competences throughout their careers.

Xiangdong Li focuses his case study on the validity of self-assessment and on how using this form of assessment provides washback in terms of the students' abilities to become autonomous self-regulated learners. The case study, conducted with undergraduate translation students from Xi'an International Studies University, demonstrates that the ability to accurately self-assess improves with continued practice and can become a valid assessment method and an effective learning tool which provides positive washback associated with learning and learners.

In the following article, de Higes Andino and Cerezo Merchán focus on the use assessment criteria and rubrics as learning tools in subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH). The article presents the findings of a case study on SDH assessment practices both in the industry and academia, which has informed the design of a set of evaluation criteria and a rubric for the SDH classroom. The final section proposes a series of interrelated and graduated tasks to enable students to engage actively in their own learning through gaining an understanding of and ability to use the proposed instruments to assess SDH.

Muñoz Miquel follows on from Huertas Barros and Vine in reviewing the current assessment practices on postgraduate translation programmes, in particular those offering medical translation. The paper provides a comparison between what is taught and assessed within these specialised university courses and what a survey of professional medical translators found was required in practice. The study reveals that while postgraduate courses on medical translation are generally in consonance with the requirements of the medical translation practice, there are some areas of divergence. One of the areas of divergence, i.e. value attached to attitudinal competences, supports the finding of the other papers in this issue in that many of the attitudinal competences are related to the ability to be an autonomous learner continuously improving translator competence. The results highlight attitudinal competence as one of the core competences needed by translators in their professional practice and suggest the need to give more prominence to this competence on postgraduate translation programmes offering medical translation.

Translator training with its primary focus on providing training for careers in translation exemplifies Boud's assertion that 'the raison d'être of a higher education is that it provides a foundation on which a lifetime of learning in work and other social settings can be built' (2006, 399) and that for this to happen 'students need to become assessors within the context of participation in practice' (2006, 399). It is this need for students to become assessors that Huertas Barros and Vine (2018) argue is part of assessment literacy and that also links the issues raised in the discussions and findings of the papers in this special issue with the current debates in HE on assessment. This special issue shows that what translator educators are already providing, or could provide more of, through their new perspectives on assessment (i.e. the washback, active learning, autonomous learning and increased awareness of attitudinal competences) is central to the new perspectives of assessment 'for' learning.

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