



22 April 2026

## Assessment of Ewa Tomczak-Łukaszewska's PhD Dissertation

*"From translation process and product to reception: investigating cognitive effort of the translator and the reader"*

### Decision: Positive Evaluation

Ewa Tomczak-Łukaszewska has submitted a fascinating dissertation that melds together a number of recurrent strands of research within Translation Studies on the translation process, the translation product (i.e. translation quality), and translation reception, with a view to "clos[ing] the loop between translation production and reception" (p.2). This is an intriguing and very much needed line of enquiry, as rightly argued in the opening pages of the dissertation, which call for an "integrated approach" to these three areas instead of studying them in isolation. In brief, the project looks to investigate how the effort exerted by the translator during the translation process shapes the quality of the translation product (i.e. its quality), and how, in turn, translation quality can influence the reading experience and ensuing comprehension of the reader. The research presented in this dissertation – drawing on studies conducted as part of the EDiT and Read Me projects – fills not only a significant empirical gap in the literature (Tomczak-Łukaszewska rightly argues that reception has been traditionally "assumed" rather than being empirically investigated), but it also proffers a noteworthy methodological contribution through the combination of different data collection techniques, triangulation of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative variables, and rigorous statistical analysis of the resulting data. Moreover, the clever design whereby the stimuli for the reading experiment are prepared as part of the earlier process experiments (and explicitly and purposely integrated into the overarching project design) is an innovation that I have not encountered before and is highly commendable.

Structurally, the dissertation comprises a tripartite contextualisation and presentation of the research project (spanning some 80 pages, plus abstract and an extensive list of references), in addition to five published articles. The first two articles focus on the translation process and product (lexical selection and information (search) behaviour); Articles 3 and 4 address the relationship between translator effort, translation quality, and reader effort; and Article 5 offers a methodological reflection, with an emphasis on the role of reader background in the interplay between translator effort, quality, and reader effort. This structure, as acknowledged in the dissertation, mirrors the very translation process itself, moving from process to product to reception.

In brief, Article 1 (co-authored), published in the *International Journal for Translation and Interpreting Research*, focuses on the lexical selection process and language dominance, investigating the effort involved in selecting lexicon as influenced by translation direction and the relationship to asymmetries in language knowledge, posted as a factor influencing translation quality. Article 2 (multi-authored), published in the *Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, broadly addresses how translators use online resources, namely the impact of directionality and text type

on use of online resources and whether time spent using online resources influences translation quality. Article 3 (multi-authored), published in *Ampersand*, serves as the bridge from Articles 1 and 2 to 4 and 5, by combining the keylogging data from the process study (as a proxy for translator effort) with eye-tracking data from readers to understand whether translator effort ultimately influences the reading experience via the quality of the translation produced. Article 4 (multi-authored), published in *Perspectives*, delves in more detail into the impact of translation quality on the reading experience by investigating the hypothesis that a low quality translation (more errors and disfluencies) will force readers to work harder. Finally, Article 5 (solo-authored by the candidate), published in *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, looks into reader-specific factors (e.g. L2 proficiency and years' use of L2) in translator cognitive effort and resulting translation quality, also linking this again to the reader-reception perspective with eye-tracking data.

The overarching findings from the project as a whole can be summarised as follows (recognising of course that this summary does not fully do justice to the level of detail and nuance presented within the dissertation):

- translator cognitive effort is asymmetrical between directions (higher for L1>L2);
- lexical uncertainty leads to greater reliance on online resources in L2 translation;
- increased use of online resources resulted in lower proofreader correction times;
- translation quality has a perceptible impact on reader cognitive effort (lower quality translations required readers to exert higher levels of cognitive effort);
- different error types resulted in different eye-movement patterns among readers;
- a higher level of source language proficiency among readers can mediate effort in cases of low-quality translation ("cross-language activation");
- standard readability formulae are inadequate when it comes to predicting reading processing difficulty when text quality is compromised by translation errors;
- lower translator effort and less experience and expertise can compromise the quality of the target text.

From start to finish, the dissertation (and articles making up this submission) unambiguously stipulates clear research objectives and questions, which are subsequently addressed and answered in light of relevant existing research and the data collected in this project. The research methods (and techniques) adopted in this study ranged from keylogging, through qualitative questionnaires, to eye-tracking, all of which are employed carefully and follow best practices in research design, participant recruitment, experiment protocol, and subsequent data handling. I was particularly delighted to see the numerous caveats and cautions mentioned in relation to the interpretation of certain data or tests (e.g. readability metrics, acknowledgement that cognitive effort is a latent construct and not directly observable, etc.). The statistical analyses also evidence a level of mastery in statistics not commonly seen in many publications in Translation Studies. The literature reviewed throughout (including in the published articles) demonstrate an outstanding awareness of relevant research. The nuanced knowledge and understanding of decades worth of natural reading research is particularly impressive, not to mention the vast array of research across Translation Studies that were reviewed as relevant to this research (e.g. studies on the effects of directionality, translation norms, expertise, translation quality assessment, etc.). Relevant research is not only reviewed as part of the conventional literature review, but also expertly woven into the discussion and evaluation sections of the articles (and contextual sections within the dissertation proper), using previous research findings effectively to support, challenge, or otherwise probe the warrantability of the data and interpretations from this research.

Weaknesses within the dissertation are truly few and far between, and it has proven difficult to find areas to critique. Nonetheless, I have posited a small number of minor questions below that could

feed into the candidate's future research and thinking, as well as addressing a couple of points of language use:

- Could a power analysis have been conducted prior to the experiments taking place to determine suitable participant numbers to achieve the desired statistical power? If not beforehand, power analyses can also be conducted *post-hoc* to lend further weight to research findings if the data reach the calculated thresholds.
- The decision to use character-adjusted metrics is logical (and was indeed an approach I used in my own studies, as Tomczak-Łukaszewska cites), but I would like to see a little reflection on some of the drawbacks of character-adjustment processes. Namely, they 'penalise' short AOIs with low character counts relative to longer AOIs with higher character counts. For instance, a dwell time of 200ms over an AOI comprising 4 characters (= 50ms/ch) is mathematically 'disadvantaged' quite considerably compared to one that comprises 10 characters (= 20ms/ch). This acknowledgement need not change any of the analysis anywhere, but it is important to recognise the shortcomings of this approach, and potentially to present unadjusted figures alongside character-adjusted figures.
- Despite awareness of more recent models (namely, the E-Z Reader model), there is still a slight tendency to over-rely on the "eye-mind hypothesis" throughout the dissertation (and articles). In some respects, I sense that this is out of convenience: the eye-mind hypothesis is the simplest, most straightforward way to refer to the link between what the eyes are looking at and what the brain might be doing. I would urge a little caution around over-reliance on this now very dated model (~60 years old?), when the E-Z Reader model shares the same basic assumptions, but is far more comprehensive. I would also add that there is also now the Über-Reader model (Reichle 2020), itself a development of the E-Z Reader model.
- Related to the above, it may be worth (in future studies) trying to conduct reading simulation exercises using the E-Z Reader or Über-Reader models and using these as a baseline for comparison with the actual eye-tracking data. Naturally, this is not a criticism of the current dissertation, but a suggestion for future research directions.
- The choice to limit the reader groups to those studying English has perhaps resulted in less clear trends than hoped. Extending the participant pool to students who do not study English could have helped here. Naturally, it's impossible to rule out any interference from English language knowledge (most university students would likely have at least some exposure to English), but recruiting from outside a language department would seem to be an obvious choice for future studies.
- A tiny point of clarification regarding ISO 17100:2015 (p.21): technically proofreading/proofreaders are not a requirement of an ISO 17100:2015-certified project. Revision/revisers are, but proofreading/proofreaders are an optional component.
- On language use, a small number of very minor issues were noted. I would like to stress however that language use throughout was excellent and these bullet points constitute the sum total of mistakes that I spotted in my reading:
  - There is repeated misuse of the possessive apostrophe in phrases like "translator's keystrokes", "translator's cognitive effort", "reader's cognitive effort", etc. Because these are general references to translators (plural) or readers (plural) instead of one specific person (singular), I would recommend either (i) using the noun adjectivally ("reader cognitive effort"), (ii) adding 'the' to generalise the construct ("the reader's cognitive effort"), or (iii) using the plural possessive apostrophe ("readers' cognitive effort");
  - p.16: "appears to resists" > "appears to resist"
  - p.28: "inference-making skills" > "inference skills" ("-making" isn't needed as the process is implied by the noun already);
  - p.46: "methodological constrains" > "methodological constraints";

- p.48: “prompting a higher % of time...” > [write in full] “prompting a higher percentage of time...”;
- In the thesis title, I would consider adding “the” before “cognitive effort”.

Overall, this dissertation makes a significant contribution to the field in several areas, noting that the following list is not exhaustive. One, it extends investigations into the hypothesis that reader experience/reception can serve as an indicator of translation quality (a notion that was proposed some time ago, but has received little attention since) on the basis that errors could trigger the widely acknowledge ‘surprise’ or ‘disruption’ response widely documented in natural reading research. Two, and more significantly, since quality is a direct product of the translation process itself, it explores the relationship between translator effort (decision-making around consultation of resources, among other things, and how this feeds into the end product) and reader effort (a smooth or disrupted reading experience) using the translated text as the crucial link between process and reception. This link has not been explored before in any meaningful way to my knowledge. Three, in looking at directionality specifically, it focuses on whole texts instead of isolated sentences or words. Four, the IBiBT model (presented in Article 2) offers a simple, but effective summary of the findings around consultation of online resources in a manner that will be useful in pedagogical contexts. Finally, the focus on non-literary reading is an innovation in itself in this type of study.

In sum, the best recapitulation of the innovative empirical and methodological contribution presented in this dissertation comes directly from Tomczak-Łukaszewska’s own words on p.79:

“The cognitive effort of professional bidirectional translators invested in the translation process – shaped by factors such as directionality and text type – reflects in the quality of the translated text, which, in turn, modulates the cognitive effort exerted by its readers.”

This marks a fundamental contribution to knowledge within Translation Studies and readability studies more widely. By drawing on theories, methods, and previous findings from across cognitive translation and interpreting studies, translation process research, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, natural reading research, and information processing, the methodological rigour and significance of the findings presented cannot be overstated. This dissertation reflects the fruits of a protracted period of dedicated, thorough, and meticulous research planning, execution, and data analysis of the highest quality within what is evidently a supportive and intellectually engaging research environment. It was a pleasure to read this well-written and carefully-crafted dissertation, and I am delighted to express in the strongest possible terms my unambiguous **positive evaluation** of this submission, which, in my view, clearly meets the legal and statutory requirements of this award.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Callum Walker**

Associate Professor of Translation Technology  
c.m.walker@leeds.ac.uk

Centre for Translation, Interpreting and Localisation Studies  
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies  
Michael Sadler Building  
University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT  
United Kingdom

## MOTION TO AWARD DISTINCTION

A reviewer may postulate to award distinction to an outstanding PhD thesis. The thesis must make a significant contribution to science. A reviewer may also provide additional arguments in favour of awarding the distinction, such as innovating research methodology, benefits for the society, educational benefits, potential for future applications of research results.

Candidate's name: **Ewa Tomczak-Łukaszewska**

Thesis title: **From translation process and product to reception: investigating cognitive effort of the translator and the reader**

Contribution to science:

**This dissertation makes a fundamental empirical and methodological contribution to the field of (Cognitive) Translation Studies by forging a hitherto unexplored link between the translation process, product, and reception – both in practice and methodologically in research. Much has been argued within Translation Studies about how readers engage with translations, but research on reading translations alone is scant. What this dissertation offers, in addition to this, is an exploration of how decisions made by the translator, earlier in the ‘production’ process can filter through to effort levels on the part of the reader, which can influence the reader’s very comprehension of a text, but also, more importantly, change their decision to act on a translated text (e.g. whether to buy a particular product). I know of no other studies in the field that have produced such a methodologically complex and collected such empirically rigorous data as presented in this thesis. These findings will be of great interest to the Cognitive Translation (and Interpreting) Studies community, but also the wider Translation Studies community more generally.**

Additional arguments for awarding the distinction:

**The sheer quantity of data collected and analysed within this project is vast in comparison to many other PhD projects that I have previously examined using eye-tracking and/or keylogging methods. Even this fact alone (notwithstanding the wider contribution to the field of Translation Studies), in my view, should make this candidate worthy of consideration for a distinction.**



Reviewer's signature