

## Creative Translation in the Classroom

### Final Report

#### Summary

- Creative Translation [CT] has the potential to improve motivation for language-learners, and to provide rich context for language acquisition.
- Following a CT workshop, the strongest student perceptions of translation shift from 'difficult', to 'interesting', when the texts chosen are suitable for the age group.
- Creative translation resources and workshops generate **inclusive and accessible** spaces for language learning, with teachers reporting **no significant issues or differences in engagement** for low prior attainers or SEND students.
- Teachers request resources and information on activities to conduct both before and after the workshop, to form a **more sustained programme of work**.
- Resources and workshops **improve students' vocabulary** (67.3% student agreement), but could be more targeted to the explicit learning of unfamiliar grammar (39.6% student agreement) where necessary.
- Further research over a period of sustained contact is needed.

#### 1. Pilot study

This pilot study aimed to explore the benefits of Creative Translation for learners of MFL through the evaluation of creative translation workshops run by The Queen's College Translation Exchange (QTE). In these workshops, students took part in a range of translation activities, designed to engage them in the process of translation. We were particularly interested in investigating the following questions:

1. Does engaging in a process of creative translation improve students' attitudes to the development of translation skills? and
2. Does engaging in a process of creative translation improve students' attitudes to the learning of languages more generally?

#### 2. Intervention and data collection

A group of undergraduates [UGs] from the University of Oxford received training from practitioners experienced in translation, workshop delivery and teaching, to develop online Creative Translation workshops for schools. These workshop materials were hosted on the collaborative web platform padlet.com. The UGs used either a poem, an extract from a graphic novel or a picture book in French, German or Spanish as the basis for the translation tasks.

Key Stage 3 learners of MFL (aged 11-14) and four MFL teachers in four state secondary schools took part in the study between June and October 2021. Each teacher was sent a different workshop to deliver to their class and had no choice in the workshop they were sent. Participating students were not required to have any prior knowledge of the language.

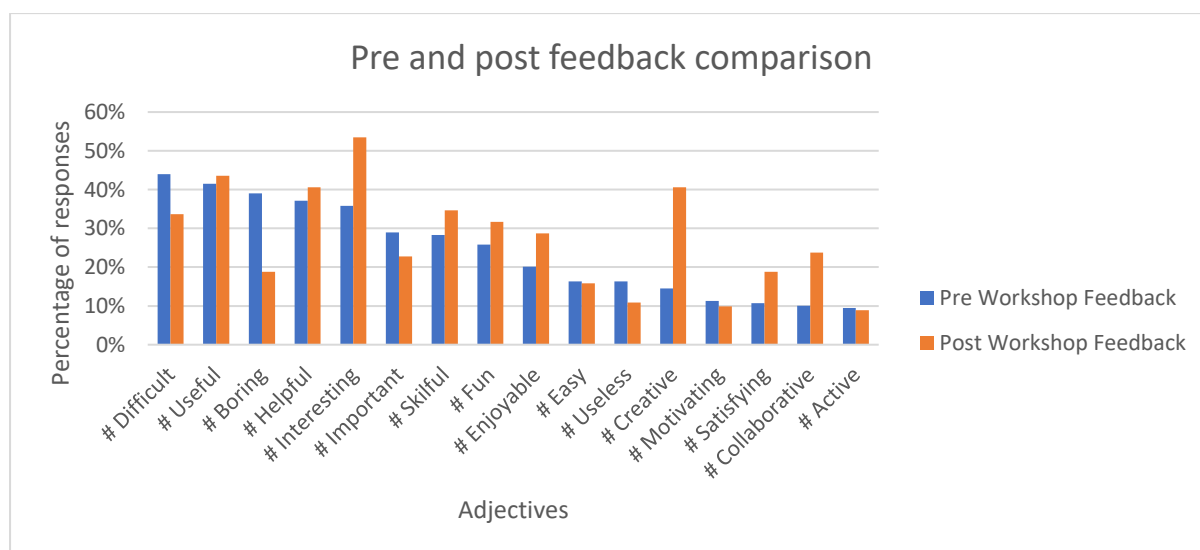
To gain an insight into students' attitudes to translation, the pre-workshop questionnaire asked students to circle as many adjectives as they liked from a list of 16 to demonstrate how they felt about translation. The list included the following adjectives in this order: *boring, interesting, fun, creative, difficult, easy, motivating, useful, enjoyable, helpful, satisfying, useless, active, important, skilful, collaborative*.

After the workshop, students were asked to evaluate their experience of the workshop to determine whether their attitudes to the development of translation skills had improved and whether engaging in a process of Creative Translation had improved their attitudes to the learning of languages more generally. Students were given a tick-list of *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* statements about a) their experience of the workshop and b) links between the translation workshop and the learning of languages. They were also asked to circle adjectives from the same list as before to determine whether there had been any shift in attitudes following the workshop.

Teachers were asked to complete a brief online questionnaire following the workshop to investigate teachers' perspectives on the students' engagement, the accessibility and relevance of the workshops, and their views on the workshop resources themselves.

### 3. Key Findings

#### Comparison of pre- and post- workshop feedback in relation to the whole sample of participating students across the 4 schools.



159 students completed the pre workshop questionnaire. 101 students completed the post workshop questionnaire.

**In general, findings indicate a potential shift in attitudes if interventions of this kind were repeated. They suggest that the workshops had a positive impact on how students felt about translating. Where the material for translation is suitable for the students, this study shows that creative translation improves attitudes of students to translation and language-learning.** Amongst the four highest percentage of recorded responses relating

to adjectives, students felt both before and after the workshop that translating was 'helpful' and 'useful'. In the pre-workshop questionnaire, the adjectives 'difficult' and 'boring' were in the four highest percentage of responses, whereas in the post-workshop responses, the adjectives 'interesting' and 'creative' ranked in the four highest. There was a 20% percentage drop for the adjective 'boring' and 10% for 'difficult' following the workshop. Conversely, the percentage of responses for the adjective 'creative' increased by 27% and 'interesting' by 17% after the workshop.

Analysis of the individual school responses shows that despite the overall positive attitude shifts, a Year 8 class of participants in one school (School 3) found translating more 'boring' and less 'interesting' and only marginally more 'creative' following the workshop. This correlates with the teacher feedback for this class. They felt that the text chosen for this workshop was not '*particularly engaging*' for the year 8 class and the workshop '*not pitched quite right for Key stage 3.*' **The individual school responses recorded for 'creative' were all 30% or higher except for School 3. This is a very positive finding that suggests the approach taken in schools 1, 2 and 4 was in line with the aims of the project.**

### Post-workshop feedback

#### Findings in relation to the whole sample of participating students across the four schools.

As above, 101 students responded to this post-workshop questionnaire.

67.3% of the 101 respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** with the following statements:

- The workshop was useful (67.3%)
- The workshop was enjoyable (67.3%)
- The workshop helped me understand new words (67.3%)
- I've learned things in the workshop I didn't know before about other languages and cultures (67.3%)
- I understand more about how different languages have different rules and different ways of saying the same thing (67.3%)

More than 50% of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** with:

- The workshop helped me to make connections between my language and another language (61.6%)
- I would like to participate in a workshop like this again (54.5%)
- I feel more confident translating in and out of French/German/Spanish as a result of the workshop (53.5%)
- The workshop made me think about how I could use my language learning later on (51%)

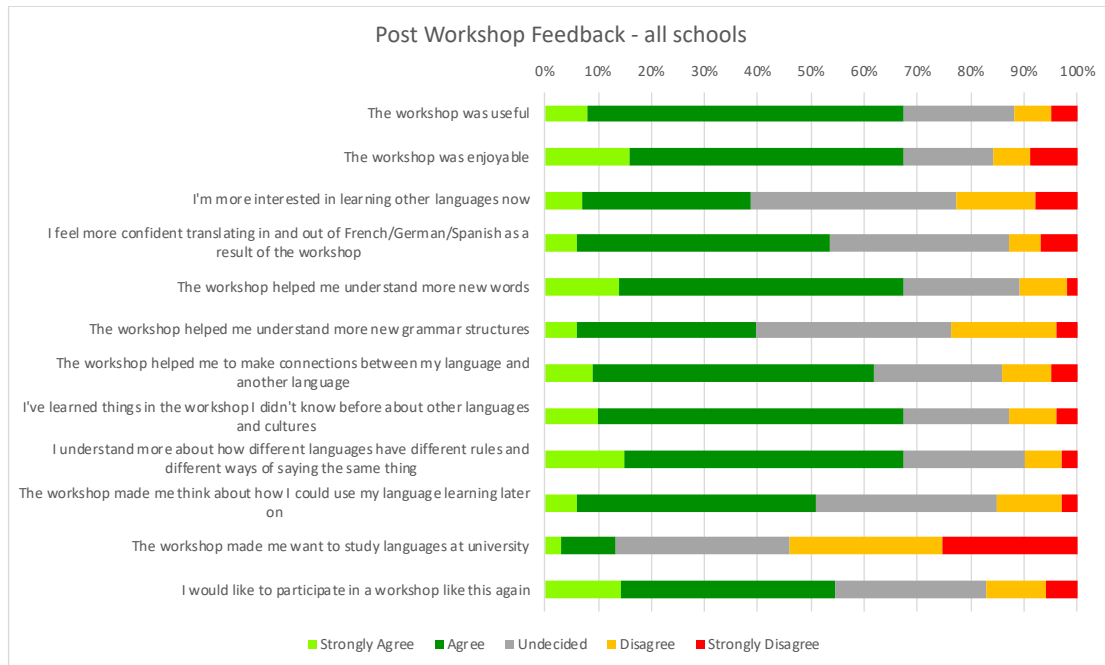
There was less agreement in relation to the following statements:

- The workshop helped me understand more new grammar structures (39.6% agreed or strongly agreed)
- I'm more interested in learning other languages now (38.6% agreed or strongly agreed)

One statement had a predominantly **negative response**:

- The workshop made me want to study languages at university (54.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 32.7% undecided)

A more detailed breakdown of the findings is shown below:



(Note: There were a small number of missing responses on 4 items ranging from 1 to 2 of respondents)

However, when the responses for the individual schools (in relation to the top 5 statements with the highest agreement) were looked at separately, a slightly different picture emerged. School 3 was less positive: 43.5% agreed the workshop was useful; 39.1% enjoyed it; 47.8% agreed with the statement about languages and cultures. Nevertheless, still more than half of respondents in School 3 (52.2%) agreed it helped them learn new words and 56.5% agreed with the statement about languages having different rules and ways of saying the same thing.

#### 4. Summary of key messages

The findings indicate that engaging in a process of creative translation can improve KS3 students' attitudes to language learning.

The findings also suggest that engaging in a process of creative translation has the potential to improve KS3 students' attitudes to the development of translation skills.

- **Prior to the workshop, students across all schools felt that translation was 'boring and difficult' although 'useful and helpful', as evidenced by the high responses attributed to these adjectives. After the workshop, the highest number of responses were given to 'creative and interesting' and 'useful and helpful'. Where the text chosen is engaging and suitable for the age group (unlike in the case of School 3), the findings are positive.**
- Students who completed the questionnaire were largely positive about their experience of the workshop as evidenced in the 5 statements with the highest percentage agreement across the schools (67.3%). Students

agreed the workshop was useful and enjoyable; they learned more new words; learned things they did not know about other languages and cultures; and understood how different languages have different rules and ways of saying the same thing. Participants in School 3 were not quite as enthusiastic although the lowest percentage agreement with these statements was 39.1 % for enjoyment. Nevertheless, these are encouraging findings in line with the aims of the project.

- There was evidence that the workshops had a direct impact on the classroom practice of two of the teachers. Teacher 1 mentioned that they would be going on to learn to recite a poem with their class. Teacher 2 mentioned that they subsequently did activities similar to the workshop with two groups of students.

## 5. Future Considerations

Drawing on the findings, we would suggest investigating a sustained intervention, such as regular workshops over a school year. This may include:

- a larger sample of schools, and a larger selection of workshops;
- comparing and contrasting attitudes of different year groups in a school as well as linking individual responses, which would enhance the validity of the evidence. Focus groups with students to further explore their views may add to this;
- exploring teacher attitudes to creative translation both prior to and following their engagement with the workshops.

To address some of the issues raised by teachers regarding the texts, the programme could benefit from:

- collaboration with classroom teachers and their input into the suitability of texts prior to the production of the workshops as well as the workshop resources. Teachers could potentially be offered a choice in the workshop to be delivered to their class. In addition, it could be beneficial to look at a programme of work that could be engaged with prior to and following the workshop itself.

*This report was prepared by Clare Savory for the Queen's College Translation Exchange, in collaboration with Charlotte Ryland and Jack Franco, as part of the project [Creative Translation in the Classroom](#). We are grateful to all teachers and pupils who took part in the project.*

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