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Entrepreneurial Potential of the Students of Applied Linguistics Programme, Majoring in Translation

Abstract

Enterprise is currently a desired conduct or set of traits. Entrepreneurial people are more often successful in their professional lives, both in terms of innovativeness, satisfaction as well as financially. Therefore, research has stressed the need to develop entrepreneurial potential in students so that, upon graduation, they are able to successfully adapt to the ever-changing conditions of the labour market and, as a result, bring their plans of professional careers to a successful fruition. Enterprise is a strongly desired set of traits and attitudes in professional translators. The article presents the research results of the nature of the entrepreneurial potential in students in the translation specialisation. These results are presented in comparison with the entrepreneurial potential of students of different programmes.

Keywords: enterprise, entrepreneurial potential, translator, student of translation specialization.

The issue of enterprise has become an often discussed subject during debates about the path academic education should take in its development. It is suggested that there is a need for activating a multi-level cooperation network between academic circles and the labour market, as well as for the need to develop entrepreneurial potential in students (Herberger & Hermaszewski 2010; Strojny & Horska 2012; Deszczyński 2007; Borowiec 2008; Piróg 2010).

Enterprise is a complex category. In the literature of the subject, different variations of its interpretation can be found – models, dimensions (Piecuch 2010; Kraśnicka 2002; Bławat 2003; Wachowiak *et al.* (eds.) 2007; Kunasz 2008; Janowski 1998; Strojny 2010). It can be regarded as a process – “an act of creating and the building of something new, a new company.” Enterprise is an organised process of activities aimed, under given conditions, at the use of an innovative idea in order to generate

a profit on the market” (Janowski 1998). It can also be viewed as a complex of characteristics or a trait of character (Strojny & Horska 2012; Fabiańska & Rokita 1986).

Publications on the subject of enterprise, both theory – as well as practice-oriented, offer various models of this category. Czesław Noworol (2005: 109) stresses the timelessness of the classic interpretation of the category of enterprise which consists of four models: spontaneous – based on the strive towards getting rich at any costs; developmental – based on the notion that everyone can become an entrepreneur; moral – based on the norms and values of a socially accepted religious, philosophical and cultural system; and promotional – based on the patronage of a developing state, implementing philosophical ideas of an entrepreneurial society. These models may be realised in a given field separately or eclectically.

As far as the range of the dimensions of enterprise, the two general ones include “individual” and “social.” From the point of view of the translation profession and the preparation for it, the particularly crucial one is the individual enterprise which “has impact on achieving success by people who are not only entrepreneurs but who also practice other professions. Thus, it is understood rather as a cardinal trait, indispensable for flexible, resourceful and creative functioning in almost any sphere of human activity” (Strojny 2010: 178). The above definition shows that individual enterprise is an integral part of the transgressive character of the translator profession.

Among the traits attributable to entrepreneurial people are: dynamism, activeness, propensity to take risks, the ability to adapt to the changing environment, noticing opportunities and ceasing them, inventiveness and mobility. On the basis of a survey of 239 entrepreneurs, Thomas M. Begley and David P. Boyd (1987) determined that the group with the greatest professional successes, including financial, was characterised by internal locus of control, tolerance of ambiguity, propensity risk-taking (making decisions involving a moderate risk), need for achievement and Type A behaviour. Teresa Piecuch, in turn, shows that the main traits which characterise entrepreneurial people include:

creative disposition, faith in oneself and self-confidence, showing initiative, independence, ability to work with people, desire for profit, inventiveness, comprehensive knowledge, creativity, decisiveness, honesty, responsibility, courage, activeness, competence, the will to lead and dominate, work discipline, resourcefulness, composure, strong character and remaining open to the reality. (Piecuch 2010: 60–61)

This list of entrepreneurial traits shows that enterprise as a certain predisposition of an individual is a multidimensional construct. Whether or not a person shows an entrepreneurial behaviour or attitude does not depend on their possession of one feature isolated from the above list, but rather on that individual having at their disposal a compilation of features which together account for that person’s individual *modus operandi*, their attitude or personality. Alina Haczek and Agnieszka Kłós (2012: 96), analysing the opinions on the entrepreneurial attitude which function in the literature of the subject, point to the fact that it is not a set of features but a “*modus operandi* which expresses an active attitude towards personal and professional problems.” This activeness is viewed as a process of realization of particular goals which should bring proportionate gains and lead to success. At the same time, being aware of the impact on their own professional career, such individuals should utilize all possible opportunities in order to develop.”

This review of various opinions about enterprise has shown that personal enterprise is highly subjective. It assumes different forms, depending on the intensity of the entrepreneurial traits in a given case. Although the source of certain propensities or traits can be found in innate characteristics of a person,

Jacek Strojny (2007) stresses the fact that enterprise should be understood as an acquired trait. This means that proper training of character traits, behaviours and skills leads to the development of entrepreneurial predispositions in an individual. According to Strojny, the shaping of such predispositions takes place mainly through two processes: socialisation at an early age and auto-creation¹ which develops along with the psychological maturing of a person.

The category of entrepreneurial potential was used by Krueger and Brazeal (1994: 94) to determine an individual's readiness and pursuit of entrepreneurial actions. The researchers stress the fact that possessing entrepreneurial traits does not translate directly onto entrepreneurial potential. The desire of entrepreneurial action is the key.

Enterprise, which was showed above, is a strongly desired set of traits and attitudes in professional translators. Because of its nature, *i.e.* diversity of types of translations, the complexity of the professional translation service, multiple forms of the employment of translators, *etc.*, the profession of a translator (Gouadec 2007; Pieńkos 1993, 2003) requires the flexibility and involvement of the translator in all the aspects of their profession in order to secure financial as well as emotional success (satisfaction).

The main aim of the research was to determine the nature of the entrepreneurial potential of the students majoring in translation. Within the main aim, the following specific aims were specified:

- to know the opinion of the students on the meaning of enterprise in the translation profession;
- to learn about the beliefs of students with respect to their own entrepreneurial traits and their entrepreneurial plans;
- to learn about the opinions of students about the contribution of the translation studies to the development of their own enterprise;
- to learn about the expectations of the students with respect to the actions undertaken by the university in order to support the development of their enterprise.

The research was conducted with the method of diagnostic survey. The technique used was a modified questionnaire of the survey by Tomasz Bernat, Jarosław Korpysa and Marek Kunasz (2008) developed to determine the level of enterprise in students.

The respondents were a group of 68 students of the 1st and 2nd year of their full-time studies in applied linguistics programme, majoring in translation. The students were from the following language groups: English-German, English-French, English-Russian and German-English. The students of the 2nd year formed the majority (48) of respondents in this survey. Because of the nature of the humanities programmes, *i.e.* their clear feminisation, the respondents included 56 women and 12 men.

The analysis of the entrepreneurial potential of translators-to-be was started with determining the opinions of the students on the relation of enterprise with the translation profession. The data presented in the table prove that the surveyed students are almost unanimous as to the fact that the entrepreneurial traits are quite important in the translation profession (92.86%). Such a distribution of answers proves that the translators-to-be are well aware of the nature of the profession they have chosen. A professional organisation of a comprehensive translation service, as well as the multitude of career paths for translators requires a high competence in the spheres which are closely related to enterprise.

¹ A comprehensive study of the problem of auto-creation in the development of an adult person was done by Lucjan Tuross (2006).

Table 1. Opinions of students about the importance of entrepreneurial traits in the translation profession and their development in university programmes in translation. Source: the author's own research

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	Are entrepreneurial traits important in the translation profession?		Do majors in translation develop entrepreneurial traits in students?	
	N	%	N	%
Definitely yes	48	70.59	4	5.88
Rather yes	15	22.09	34	50.00
Difficult to say	3	4.41	28	41.18
Rather not	2	2.94	2	2.94
Definitely not	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	68	100.00	68	100.00

With regard to the value of translation programmes in developing entrepreneurial traits in students, the respondents expressed mostly positive opinions, however much less so than when replying to the previous question (55.88%). When explaining their response, the students said that it is most visible at consecutive, simultaneous and specialist translation classes. However, the respondents also said that this depends on the teacher much more than on the subject. The respondents also showed strong indecisiveness when asked for an evaluation of their study programmes with regard to enterprise.

Another issue addressed in the research was to determine the beliefs of the students on the subject of the traits characterising an entrepreneurial person. The exploration of this area was expanded with a students' evaluation of their personal entrepreneurial traits. The surveyed students also pointed out that the traits are developed at their programmes.

The data presented in Table 2 show that, according to the surveyed translators-to-be, the most important traits of an entrepreneurial person are 1) go-getting and creativity, 2) diligence and 3) the readiness to search for new solutions. A comparison of the results with the surveys of students from different programmes which were carried out by Kunasz (2009), and Herberger and Hermaszewski (2010) showed that all three groups of respondents differ slightly in their choices. The respondents showed preferences which very strongly imply a connection with the nature of the translation profession. The process of preparing oneself for this profession, as well as its performance require diligence, the readiness to search for new solutions and creativity, thus transgressive and proactive actions. The go-getting-ness is also a trait desired in translators. Its value is clearly revealed particularly in relation to the search for commissions, auto-presentation during oral translations or in the broadly understood sphere of translator-client contacts.

In the light of the examination, it was also important to determine if the students regarded themselves as entrepreneurial individuals. The respective data are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Traits of an entrepreneurial person, according to the surveyed students. Source: the author's own research, *source: Kunasz (2009: 207), ** source: Herberger & Hermaszewski (2010: 72)

Traits of an entrepreneurial person	Acc. to surveyed students of applied linguistics N = 68 (ranks)	Acc. to Polish students surveyed* N = 603 (ranks)	Acc. to students of PWSZ in Głogów** N = 376 (data in n)
Readiness to raise responsibility	7	8	186
Willingness to search for new solutions	3	2	114
Ability to predict and calculate risks	5	1	198
Practical education	9	10	51
Industriousness	2	6	136
Intuition	10	9	36
Diligence, meticulousness care	6	7	91
Go-getting-ness and creativity	1	4	77
Adaptation to changing conditions	8	3	65
Communicativeness	4	5	114

Table 3. Selected indicators of enterprise of the surveyed students. Source: the author's own research

	Do you consider yourself an entrepreneurial person?		Do/Did you work during your studies?		Are you active outside your basic university classes?	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definitely yes	3	4.41	18	26.47	7	10.29
Rather yes	24	35.29	19	27.94	16	23.53
Difficult to say	27	39.71	3	4.41	21	30.88
Rather not	14	20.59	20	29.41	24	35.29
Definitely not	0	0.00	8	11.76	0	0.00
Total	68	100.00	68	100.00	68	100.00

The surveyed translators-to-be gave an equal number of responses showing their conviction of their own enterprise (39.71%) and those showing their indecisiveness in the matter. One of four of the respondents did not find in themselves entrepreneurial traits. In the group of students surveyed by Kunasz, the percentage who regarded themselves as entrepreneurial increased to 73.2%, and 62.23% in the group at PWSZ in Głogów. Thus it is clear that the surveyed translators-to-be were most cautious in the evaluations of their personal entrepreneurial characteristics.

Such obvious differences in the perception of their own enterprise showed the comparative surveys may be caused by the fact that the authors of the cited reports used in the question on dichotomy criteria – yes/no, while the survey of the linguistics students was modified and a criteria consisting of five categories was used. This was done intentionally because the author attempted to determine the intensity of the students' belief in their own enterprise. It was also assumed that the neutral category of "difficult to say" would provide vital information for the organizers of academic education. The purpose of this was to reduce the risk of obtaining answers from the respondents which would not really reflect their beliefs, but which would rather be dictated by the desire to present a positive self-image. Thus, attention should be paid to the fact that almost 40% of the surveyed students of linguistics had difficulty with determining if they were entrepreneurial or not entrepreneurial individuals. Such clearly displayed indecisiveness can be regarded as a risk factor in the successful transition to the labour market.

With regard to the students' actions which may be indicators of their enterprise (Table 3), it was determined that over half of the respondents (54.41%) worked or work during their studies. The most frequent occupations included: private classes in a foreign language, written translations for friends, work in the service sector – shop assistants, barmen, waiters, *etc.* With regard to that group of students, finding a job during studies is a good signal for their future professional achievements. However it should also be pointed out that the remaining surveyed students, who graduated from BA programmes and are about to finish their MA programme, have not yet worked. Such behaviour is risky with regard to the nature of the contemporary labour market. The fact of being a student of a full-time programme and being financially provided for by parents are not sufficient reasons for not looking for work (even part-time) until after graduation.

Important information is provided by the data on the level of involvement of the translators-to-be in some activity outside university. One in three respondents admitted that they are involved in some extra academic actions, most of which are hobbies, trainings, and other forms of education – courses, post-graduate courses, *etc.* The remaining 66.18% of the translators-to-be admitted that their activities are limited to their academic responsibilities, or they could not determine the level of their involvement in any extra academic activities.

Of the entrepreneurial traits indicated by the surveyed students, the most important was diligence (Diagram 1).

The greatest difference was recorded in the case of go-getting-ness and creativity. On the one hand, the students regarded this trait as the main trait in entrepreneurial people. On the other hand, they admitted that they themselves were characterised by it the least of all the other analysed traits. Such a distribution of results is quite surprising. Bearing in mind the nature of the studies, it is difficult to assume that the students of bilingual translation programmes are not very creative individuals. The explanation of this situation can be the fact that the respondents probably evaluated their own level of go-getting-ness which in the discussed survey was presented in the same category. These features are very distinct and they do not always coexist. However, in spite of being aware of the controversy of such a combination, the author purposefully did not change the criteria suggested by Kunasz so that comparative analysis could be performed. Thus, it is probable that the surveyed translators-to-be were creative individuals but characterised, in their own minds, with little go-getting-ness.

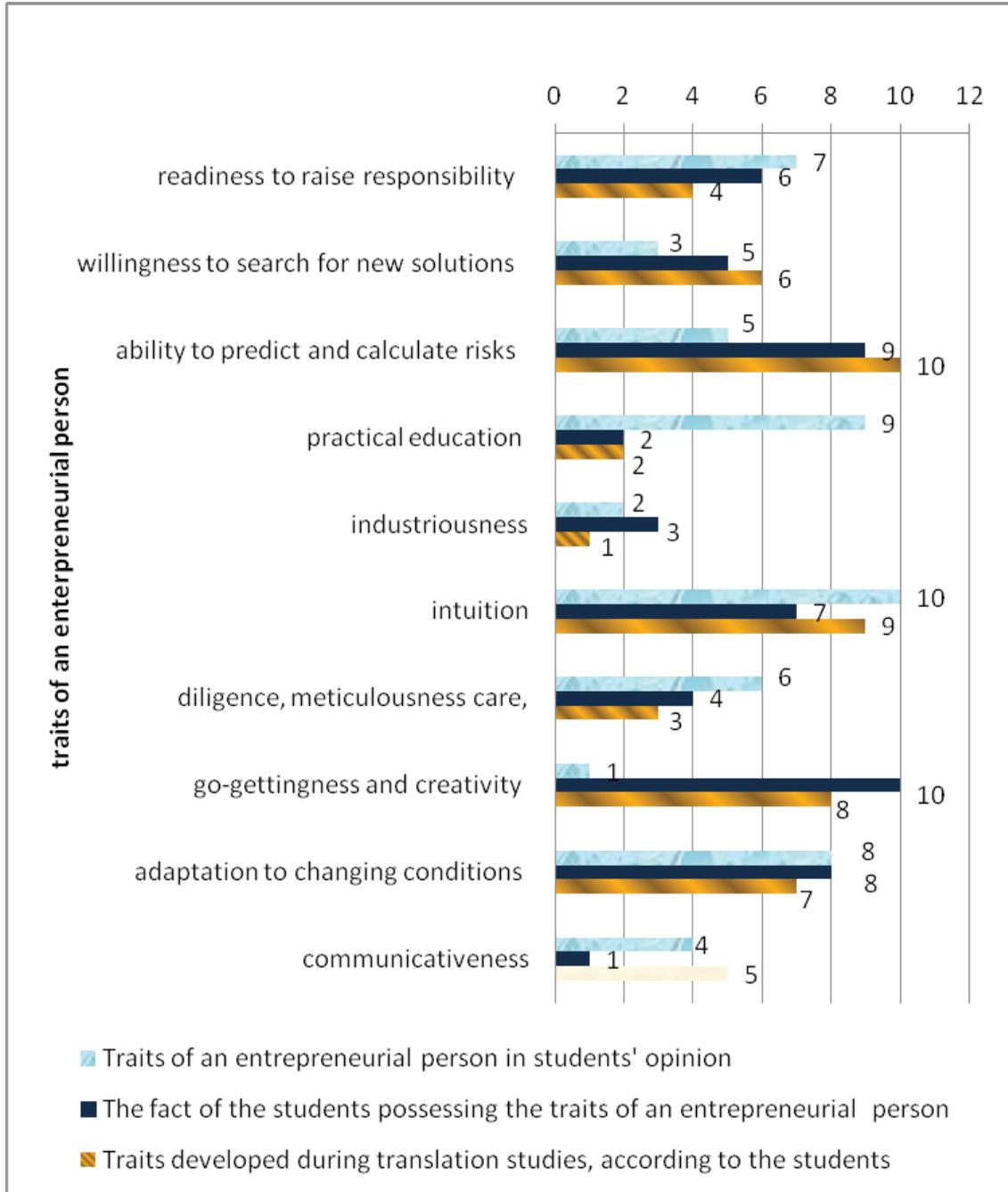


Diagram 1. A compilation of opinions of translators-to-be with respect to the traits of an entrepreneurial person, their own traits and those developed at the university (propagated data, from 1 = highest rank). Source: the author's own research

It should be stressed that the surveyed translators-to-be did not have any difficulty in naming actions which the university could undertake to improve their chances of developing their entrepreneurial competences. According to the rank, the students would like the linguistics programme, even independently of the major in translation of teaching methodology, to offer the following:

- A. more practice where they could learn various segments of the labour market;
- B. practical subjects, *e.g.* training in managerial skills, soft competences;
- C. meetings with employers;
- D. classes or workshops which would prepare for setting up their own company.

Only two of the respondents claimed that the currently realised level of entrepreneurial education in their studies is sufficient and that they did not see the need to add other elements to their programme. The surveyed translators-to-be also showed that their needs with respect to the actions to be taken by the university coincide with such needs of the students of PWSZ in Głogów (Herberger & Hermaszewski 2010).

The students also showed what kind of entrepreneurial knowledge they need most. The translators-to-be named training in business plan preparation as the most important. They also admitted that, due to the nature of the translation profession which is often in the form of self-employment, they also value the knowledge of the procedure of setting up your own company, how to run your business and the possibilities of obtaining funds for opening a company.

The presented results of the survey on entrepreneurial potential do not fully exhaust the subject. They do, however, give a good guidance as to the nature of entrepreneurial behaviours and mindsets of the surveyed translators-to-be. The analyses have shown that a considerable number of the students possess resources which point to a significant entrepreneurial potential. On the other hand, a sizeable percentage of the students proved to be characterised by indecisiveness in their assessments or by a low degree of certainty as to their entrepreneurial traits. It is impossible to conclude on the basis of the conducted analyses if the students do not possess entrepreneurial traits, or if they do possess them but they cannot see them. And if they cannot see them, then what is the cause of that. But for university teachers this is a vital piece of information which can help them learn from their students' opinions on the discussed matter.

The demand to include entrepreneurial education into academic programmes can be found in numerous theoretical publications and research results. Regardless of the researched aspects of enterprise, *i.e.* attitudes, traits, behaviour, beliefs of the students on this matter, researchers agree that the university plays a vital role in the process of developing and forming entrepreneurial attitudes in students (Strojny & Horska 2012; Kunasz 2008; Herberger & Hermaszewski 2010; European Commission... 2008). Being a bridge between education and the labour market, and enjoying a high status in society, universities have enormous possibilities to provide students with a platform to become entrepreneurs.

Some of practical suggestions for universities are provided by the Directorate-General for the European Commission Enterprise and Industry (2008: 23) which argues that "entrepreneurship education programmes can have different objectives, such as:

- developing an entrepreneurial drive among students (raising awareness and motivation);
- training students in what is needed to set up a business, and to manage its growth;
- developing the entrepreneurial abilities needed to identify and exploit business opportunities."

The European Commission named some main elements of entrepreneurship education (in different fields of study). According to them (2008: 26), “through appropriate methods of delivery (...), programmes and courses should be geared to the acquisition of generic and horizontal skills, aiming to make students:

- more creative/innovative; highly motivated; pro-active; self-aware; self-confident; willing to challenge;
- better communicators; decision-makers; leaders; negotiators; networkers; problem solvers; team players; systematic thinkers;
- less dependent; less risk averse; able to live with uncertainty; capable of recognising opportunities.”

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