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## Using the Portfolio Method for Training Entrepreneurial Attitudes in Future Professional Translators

### Abstract

Students' transition to graduate careers has for long been defined in terms of an educational challenge. This holds good for translation service provision careers: students need facilitation of business management competences, but perhaps even more so educational initiatives to empower their mindsets towards effective and successful market functioning. The article argues that the portfolio method can be instrumental in developing entrepreneurial attitudes of would-be translators. Apart from being a learning tool, the portfolio can make class assessment meaningful and transformative for both stakeholders. Students can better understand where they are on their learning trajectory and plan next steps. Teachers can improve class concepts and implementation. The case study in the article concerns a class devoted to translation service provision held at the MA level for students of Applied Linguistics. More precisely, student-provided content on one task out of five in the class portfolio is discussed to give insight into their attitudinal entrepreneurial competences (Lackéus 2015).

**Keywords:** translation service provision competence, entrepreneurial attitudes, portfolio, learning as transformation, communicative learning

### Introduction

This article discusses how the portfolio method can empower benefits for both stakeholders of the educational process when applied in a class devoted to facilitating translation service provision competence. The main argument is that the portfolio offers students an opportunity to make the class more significant since it engages them in co-developing class content that is personally-oriented and concerns individual career planning. The student-provided portfolio content informs both the student about what they know, are able and ready to do. This latter point coincides with the benefits for the teacher. They can help students dialogically self-diagnose their competences, but even more importantly, they can

use portfolios to suggest developmental trajectories and empower students' attitudinal potential. One more vital advantage for both students and teachers is that the portfolio can enhance class evaluation. The student-provided content (summative assessment) and the oral examination procedure applied (formative assessment, dialogical approach) make the examination an integral part of the learning process. Finally, the portfolio can serve the teacher in evaluating and enhancing the class for content, classroom interaction and (summative and formative assessment).

In the pedagogical perspective adopted in this study, the attitudinal aspects of the class in translation service provision and the portfolio are seen as equally educationally valued as the formal, curricular academic focus on students' learning outcomes. This stance is rooted in two working assumptions. Firstly, even though the majority of students in Applied Linguistics (and related courses) had at least some experience with professional translation or language service provision, the perspective of turning it into a regular career trajectory (career transition) causes student anxiety (Klimkowska 2014; Klimkowska and Klimkowski 2015, 2020). Secondly, we follow Lackéus (2015) in his efforts to integrate the content (cognitive) and the attitudinal (non-cognitive) dimensions of entrepreneurship competence (see details below). One of his integrative proposals consists in adopting the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Lackéus 2015: 16), with the aim of building linkages between attitudes, intentions and behaviour:

If people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship are positively influenced by entrepreneurial education, their entrepreneurial intentions will also change, and it will subsequently lead to the so desired entrepreneurial behavior. (Lackéus 2015: 16)

Under this view, student attitudinal potential becomes a regular resource in a goal-oriented educational framework. The goal is not only to make students master knowledge and skills (and to measure advancement), but to make them act (and self-reflect on the action).

In what follows, we discuss a selection of concepts that underlie our study. Then we outline the concept of the class in translation service provision, with the role of class portfolio and a brief description of the examination procedure. In the empirical part, an analysis of the student-provided content for one out of five portfolio tasks is discussed. The content is then used as a source for potential improvements in the class content, the portfolio and the examination procedure.

### **Literature Review on Main Concepts. Translation Service Provision Competence (TSPC)**

Debates on what it takes to be an effective translator started in late 1970 to have their peak at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until 2009, the debate had tended to approach the translator's skills with no direct reference to the professional, business-related reality of the career. This changes with a concept of translation competence proposed in EMT (2009). Unlike other models of the time (e.g. Göpferich, 2009 or PACTE 2003 and later), service provision is postulated to be a central, controlling element of the whole process of applying translator competence in actual, professional practice. The centrality of the translation service provision competence is neither discussed, nor justified by the authors of EMT (2009), but it certainly coincides with the rise of a new strand within Translation Studies, called by one of its proponents (Chesterman 2009) *Translator Studies*. The main argument for this new approach was a need to expand the scope of explorations in Translation Studies to cover the human (agentive and

cognitive) and the social (networks, power, collaboration) aspects of what translation is becoming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Among a vast number of publications in this relatively recent research field, there are those particularly oriented on translation as a service and translation service provision as a process (Brax 2013; Gouadec 2007; Koskinen 2020; Kujamäki 2021; Svahn 2020). More often than not, these contributions also include suggestions for educational practice (e.g. Aarikka-Stenroos 2010; Galán-Mañas *et al.* 2020; Klimkowska and Klimkowski 2020; Koskinen 2020; Kujamäki 2020).

### Entrepreneurial Attitudes

As already mentioned, Lackéus (2015: 9) argues that entrepreneurial attitudes are as important in entrepreneurial training as entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. He observes that all three aspects form an indivisible continuum since knowledge and skills remain declarative rather than behavioural unless the attitudinal dimension is kept in view. Knowledge and skills are more easily handled by education systems, while attitude training hardly goes well with contemporary formal, neo-positivist curricula. This is why attitudinal training is often neglected, which is a problem since there is a growing body of research (see Lackéus 2015: 9 and references) proving that attitudinal factors affect student academic performance and career transition. The entrepreneurial attitudes listed in (Lackéus 2015: 10) are as follows:

1. Passion (“I want,” “I need to achieve this”);
2. Self-efficacy (“I can”);
3. Identity (“I am,” “It matters to me”);
4. Proactiveness (“I do,” “I am ready”);
5. Handling ambiguity/uncertainty (“I can handle the risks”);
6. Innovativeness (“Let’s do it in a different way”);
7. Perseverance (“Whatever it takes, I will make it”).

The meaning of these qualities is perhaps evident enough, though each of the items listed by (Lackéus 2015) is a concept with its research background (see references in Lackéus 2015). The role that Lackéus (2015) foresees for the entrepreneurial attitudes is rather complex. The knowledge-skills-attitudes continuum requires a dynamic linkage between the three. The linkage is provided by the theory of planned behaviour (TBP), which (Lackéus 2015: 10) relates directly to (Ajzen 1991). Under this theory, behaviours result from intentions, while intentions emerge when catalysed by at least one or all of three determinants: attitudes, subjective norms (“this needs to be done”) and behaviour control (“I can do it”) (Ajzen 1991: 188). Hence, attitudes are seen by Lackéus (2015) as a point of departure for an entrepreneurial action since they influence entrepreneurial intentions and condition entrepreneurial behaviours. Through feedback and reflection, behaviours amplify, weaken or modify attitudes. In this way, new or reiterated entrepreneurial cycles take place. Educational intervention can lead to changes in intentions and actions (Lackéus 2015: 19). Notwithstanding the above, entrepreneurial attitudes are rather difficult to embrace in a predominantly positivistic pedagogy, with its emphasis on measurable, comparable learning outcomes. As argued by Lackéus (2015):

The current educational policy climate emphasizing high-stakes standardized testing, international large-scale assessments and institutional ranking has led to a focus on cognitive competencies,

neglecting non-cognitive competencies. This has led to a narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the tests and a de-professionalisation of teachers. (Lackéus 2015: 9)

To make matters worse, Lackéus (2015) observes that it is rather problematic to determine what kind of educational intervention is conducive to attitude forming or to decide whether a given activity triggered positive or negative attitudes, intentions or actions (Lackéus 2015: 20). Lackéus points out that qualitative assessment methods can be a more promising method of evaluating attitudinal change (Lackéus 2015: 20–22).

### Transformative Learning

An effective shift to qualitative assessment requires a more substantive change – that of the pedagogical approach. The first step to mark the change in this study is to approach *learning as transformation*. Education has always formulated its objectives in terms of *change*, yet it constantly finds it problematic to define its objectives (why change and what for?), scale (how much change?) and roots (who/what evokes change?). Learning as transformation (or transformative learning) is an approach assuming that, under certain conditions, learning can lead to significant changes in a learner's worldview and personality. This is a pivotal idea behind the educational concept originally forwarded by Mezirow. The concept took many forms and formulations, yet for the purposes of this study, the following makes the optimal match:

Transformative learning is understood as a uniquely adult form of metacognitive reasoning. Reasoning is the process of advancing and assessing reasons, especially those that provide arguments supporting beliefs resulting in decisions to act. Beliefs are justified when they are based on good reasons. The process of reasoning may involve such tacit knowledge as aptitudes, skills, and competencies. (Mezirow 2003: 58)

For Mezirow, learning means that a person who learns is cognitively, affectively and motivationally equipped with tools for adaptation to the changing environmental conditions. Thus learning content becomes *knowledge* if the learning process unveils to the learner opportunities to act on the content (include, discriminate, reflect) (Mezirow 2003: 58–59). It seems worthwhile to postulate that attitude formation can be seen as a transformative process taking place in the educational environment.

There is yet another idea in Mezirow (2003) that we would like to make use of here: the dialectic relationship between *instrumental* and *communicative learning*:

Instrumental learning is about controlling and manipulating the environment, with emphasis on improving prediction and performance. Instrumental learning centrally involves assessing truth claims – that something is as it is purported to be. Communicative learning refers to understanding what someone means when they communicate with you. This understanding includes becoming aware of the assumptions, intentions and qualifications of the person communicating. (Mezirow 2003: 59 – the original text formatting modified – K.K.)

Mezirow (2003) defines transformative learning in terms of discursive action. The learning process is a dialogue “involving assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values [...] referred to from the point of view of a particular frame of reference” (Mezirow 2003: 60). In the discursive perspective, all classroom participants are learners taking the perspective of others. A conclusion from Mezirow's conceptualisations

is that unpredictability of learning and assessment is its regular quality – at least when learning is to change not only what we know, but how we behave. The ideas presented above give theoretical justification for the solutions described below.

### **A Class in Translation Service Provision**

The approach adopted in designing a class in translation service provision seeks to build a dialectical relationship between the formal, curricular aspects and the transformative, discursive approach. This is practically implemented by a division into the content class component and the discursive class dynamics.

The case in point is a class in translation service provision delivered to MA students in Applied Linguistics at the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. The class features four main content components:

1. Service portfolio component is to help students assess: (a) which areas of specialization match their interests; (b) which of these areas offer profitability vistas; (c) which areas offer client base opportunities.
2. Business model component is about designing an ecosystem in which services are to be offered.
3. Basics of business management is a component devoted to concepts of income, costs, taxation *etc.*
4. Marketing and CRM discusses optimal means for finding and retaining clients.

Out of 15 meetings (90 minutes each), 10 are devoted to workshops, discussions, tasks and activities. The remaining 5 meetings invite industry experts: translators, interpreters as well as other language industry entrepreneurs and organisations. The class ends with an hybrid (oral-written) examination consisting of two components:

1. Knowledge examination: students make a random pick out of 15 topics from the list provided when the semester starts.
2. Portfolio: at the first meeting, students are presented with 5 obligatory tasks to discharge in the form of class portfolio. The tasks correspond to the four main content components. Each portfolio task is discussed in-class when concluding each content component. At the examination, the portfolios are presented by students and discussed. The examination focuses on content and facts (portfolio is assessed as a written task), and on how students present, discuss, question or are ready to rethink their choices (discursive and transformative task).

The status of portfolio method in translator education is unquestionable. The method has long been recognized as an educational instrument in holistic and situated approaches to translator training (*e.g.* Calvo 2015; Eskelinen and Pakkala-Weckström 2016 or Galán-Mañas 2016, 2019). Most contributions highlight the benefits of portfolios for training professional skills as they offer a “constructive alignment in the process of both teaching and learning of translators’ professional competences” (Eskelinen and Pakkala-Weckström 2016: 314). Portfolios are also seen instrumental for integrating summative and formative assessment, with focus on “assessing the progressive development of competence” since they “mobilise all the competences required to successfully develop translation competence” (Galán-Mañas

2016: 161). In this study, it is argued that the portfolio can also serve well as a tool for class evaluation. The way students interact with portfolios shows if they understand the tasks and find them meaningful and relevant to their learning trajectories. The way students discuss portfolios in the exam shows their attitudinal engagement: lower – if they find the class to be just another ‘subject’; higher – if they recognise opportunities to learn and grow. These behavioural patterns can be used by teachers to experiment with class content and dynamics and enhance the learning experience of students and teachers.

### Portfolio Task 1: Data and Discussion

After the first class edition in 2023, 33 portfolios were collected. Students were informed about an option to refuse to have their portfolios used for research purposes, and they were asked to express their consent in writing. The consent covers data presentation for research and educational purposes.

The collected student portfolios provide a lot of material for analysis, including screening the student-provided content for the seven attitudinal competences postulated by (Lackéus 2015). Discussing results for all tasks requires a series of publications, rather than one. Hence, owing to the space limits of this article, the main argument line outlined here is illustrated with results for only one task. The task reported here opens the portfolio and contains the following instruction:

Task 1: Make a list of translation types and specialization areas that could go to your service portfolio as related to the parameters of profitability and client base opportunities

The task corresponds to a related classroom activity, in which alignment was sought between students’ interests in particular domains of specialization, profitability vistas they foresee for these domains and the perceived customer base opportunities. The table below presents the students’ responses to the task, with frequency data for the particular responses recorded. The responses are distributed into six categories, corresponding to the list of entrepreneurial attitudes in (Lackéus 2015).

Table 1. Results for Task 1 (source: own research)

| <b>Entrepreneurial passion (I want)</b> |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| 1                                       | This domain is interesting                        | 6  |
| 2                                       | This domain is my favourite                       | 5  |
| 3                                       | I am passionate about this domain                 | 1  |
| 4                                       | It is a pleasure translating in this domain       | 1  |
| <b>Self-efficacy (I can)</b>            |   |    |
| 1                                       | I can benefit from a wide customer base           | 24 |
| 2                                       | I can recognize and use market opportunities      | 10 |
| 3                                       | I can both translate and interpret                | 9  |
| 4                                       | I can benefit from distant work                   | 7  |
| 5                                       | I can benefit from the hybrid business model      | 4  |
| 6                                       | I can benefit from state regulation in the domain | 3  |
| 7                                       | I can build strategic relations with clients      | 3  |
| 8                                       | I can benefit from limited competition            | 2  |

|   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| 9   | I can start relatively early after graduation/now                          | 1  |
| 10  | I can use the contacts I have  | 1  |
| 11  | I can use my knowledge in other domains                                    | 1  |
| 12  | I can build a premium brand  | 1  |
| <b>Entrepreneurial identity (I value, it is important to me, I see myself as)</b> |  |    |
| 1   | Being a sworn translator is prestigious                                    | 2  |
| 2   | My work is important   | 2  |
| 3   | My work is recognised  | 2  |
| <b>Proactivity (I am ready)</b>   |  |    |
| 1   | I am ready to expand my customer base                                      | 11 |
| 2   | I am ready to develop my skills  | 7  |
| 3   | I am ready to engage in international cooperation                          | 3  |
| 4   | I am ready to service clients in Spanish                                   | 2  |
| <b>Managing ambiguity and uncertainty (I can manage despite risks)</b>            |  |    |
| 1   | I am ready to manage competition   | 2  |
| 2   | This domain offers reduced risk of AI exposure                             | 1  |
| 3   | I am ready to face the difficulties of entering into the market            | 1  |
| 4   | I am ready to address the quality-price factor behind customer preferences | 1  |
| 5   | I am ready to handle the emotional load of texts in this domain            | 1  |
| 6   | I am ready to take difficult qualification tests                           | 1  |
| <b>Innovativeness (I can do it this way)</b>                                      |  |    |
| 1   | This domain allows defining market niches                                  | 5  |
| 2   | I consider offering a service mix  | 4  |
| 3   | I can see options for a new service branch                                 | 1  |

Student responses are analysed to find opinions and statements that match each category description. Hence, responses for *Entrepreneurial Passion* are classified as based on students' verbally acknowledged interest in a given domain. *Self-efficacy* contains statements explicitly reporting students' abilities or planned options. *Entrepreneurial Identity* features statements relating to the perceived status, value or importance of the planned activities. *Proactivity* and *Managing Ambiguity/Uncertainty* include statements expressed in terms of students' readiness to act. The last reported category is *Innovativeness*, which lists responses showing readiness to expand a basic service paradigm. As can be observed, the table does not contain results for category *Perseverance* as no response in Task 1 could legitimately classify. Responses in the particular categories do not add to 33 (participants total) since in many cases, students' responses classified to more than one category. For this reason, no percentage data can be attributed to the responses, either.

The distribution of data for Task 1 allows a number of insights into students' attitudinal competences, providing hints and indications for the subsequent editions of the class. As regards *Entrepreneurial Passion*, even though expecting authentically passionate statements about domains of students' professional interests is perhaps unrealistic, it cannot be ignored that 20 out of 33 portfolios report no overt statement of such interests. The most frequent response concerns a reported interest in

a domain - attracting 6 responses - with 5 other responses indicating that a domain is the respondents' favourite. One response did overtly mention passion, and another one pleasure in translating in a particular domain of specialization.

There are two working conclusions that these data offer. Firstly, that the instructions to fill in Task 1 can be improved so as to elicit overt statements from students concerning their interests in a given domain. It seems that the respondents focus more on the 'objective' observations about the domains, their market status and profitability vistas, but ignore how these can be aligned with their personal interests. To some extent, the fact that the participants list this or that domain of translation specialization can be read as interest marker, but eliciting its overt, verbal formulation can help students make better-informed choices. It can also enable transformative learning, where students' choices depend less on what others think, and more on what they informedly define as their career opportunities. Secondly, the interest-related information needs to be discussed at the examination meeting, with the communicative learning approach as an optimal tool.

Far more responses classify under *Self-efficacy*. The largest number (24) confirm the students' recognition of a wide customer base for a domain of their choice. Another 10 statements confirm that the students recognize and exploit market opportunities in relation to a particular domain. In 9 portfolios, the students express their readiness to translate and interpret in a service mix. 7 respondents point out to the expected benefits of distant work, while 4 students report their readiness for a hybrid business model (part-time in-housing and part-time solopreneurship plus a diversified service portfolio with translation and language teaching). 3 students notice that state regulations can be advantageous when working in a domain of their choice, and another 3 express an opportunity that a given domain presents for building strategic business links. 2 students see their advantage in limited competition in a domain they discussed in Task 1. 1 student observes that they are ready for professional action right now as regards a domain of their choice. Another person points to their readiness to employ the contacts they have. One more person added a plan to build a premium brand for their activity in a particular domain, with quality and strong partnership being overtly mentioned as key factors defining the premium brand status.

The discrepancy between the two first responses reported for *Self-efficacy* needs to be elaborated upon. While the former response – *I can benefit from a wide customer base* – can be interpreted in terms of the students' general perception of the market demand, the latter one – *I can recognize and use market opportunities* – overtly proves that the respondents did something to confirm the demand, and are able to use this information as their business opportunity.

Two working conclusion come to mind in this context. Firstly, the Task instructions need a review to confirm that students' responses are more than 'what they think the market is like.' They will be expected to provide only confirmed data about the demand. Secondly, the oral examination procedure needs to confirm the evidence-based nature of students' statements.

Three statements – with 2 responses each – are classified as markers of *Entrepreneurial Identity*. 2 students express their belief that being a sworn translator is prestigious, 2 students pinpointed that their engagement in a given domain renders their work important, while 2 other responses add that the work is recognized. An obvious working conclusion from this part of the research is that *Entrepreneurial Identity* needs a stronger empowerment in the class. The examination meeting needs to accent this area more, as well.



23 responses classify as verbal markers of *Proactivity*. 11 students admit being ready to expand their customer base thanks to their engagement in a given domain. 7 respondents observe that engaging in a given domain offers them developmental opportunities. 3 students express readiness to engage into international cooperation, while 2 mention overtly their plans to engage a particular target group: specific clients in need of language services in Spanish.

The extent to which these statements are merely declarative is impossible to assess. Yet, the collected responses for *Proactivity* are a good marker of the presence of this attitude in the respondents. Less optimistic is the fact that only 23 out of 33 portfolios contain such overt statements, which - again - gives grounds for improvement both as regards class content and dynamics and the examination framework. The task is not only to inspire students to express readiness for action, but more so to make these actions likely by discussing concrete working parameters.

There are 6 discrete statements classified as representative of *Managing Ambiguity/Uncertainty*, and they correspond to only 7 responses. 2 participants expressed readiness to manage the risk of market competition, while all the other statements were expressed by single students. Generally speaking, risk management is not of concern to the majority of respondents, and the topic certainly requires more emphasis educationally; both in-class and in the examination context.

The data collected for *Innovativeness* show that 5 out of 33 students recognize a niche potential in the domain they discuss in their portfolio. 4 students see opportunities behind a service mix, and one plans a new service branch. On the one hand, expectations that would-be service providers be innovative before they even embark on their career are as if excessive. On the other, the sooner they learn to seek innovation, the more likely they are to be trend setters rather than trend followers. From the educational point of view, innovativeness certainly deserves a greater emphasis in the class and the examination dialogue.

Finally, no responses are classifiable as verbal markers of *Perseverance*. This is at least partly explained by the fact that perseverance is rather hard to observe as long as no real activity is involved. Even if attested, any verbal statements in this respect could only have a declarative value. One can think about educational activities to enhance students' readiness to persevere, but - unlike most other skills discussed above - authentic perseverance is born through real-life engagement in business operations. The scope of the class does not cover this kind of project. In the formal educational context of the class, we need to confine ourselves with the skills for *Managing Ambiguity/Uncertainty*, which relate to *Perseverance* in a long-term optics.

## Conclusions

This article aims to prove that the portfolio method is a "tool of choice" (Galán-Mañas 2016) in training translation service provision competence, with particular emphasis on entrepreneurial attitudes (Lackéus 2015). The presented design of a class in translation service provision includes student portfolios as tasks related to class content and as a component of the semester examination. In its evaluation function, the portfolio provides a dialectical relationship of summative, formal assessment of student-provided content and of the formative, discursive, transformative evaluation of the students' present learning stage while pinpointing developmental trajectories. Its transformative nature is realized through examination

dialogue: trying to define the learning status quo in attitudinal competences, working out what can be done next, formulating plans how to achieve new or modified objectives. Finally, as for class evaluation, the data extracted from 33 student portfolios give an insight into a map of students' entrepreneurial attitudes, which allows a reflection on class effectiveness and offers vistas for enhancements (content, interaction, examination). Some examples of potential enhancements are discussed when portfolio data are presented.

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