Developing and using blended and collaborative online tools in translation education: a case study

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Overview

- Translation is intrinsically a collaborative activity (Cordingley & Frigan Manning 2017), even more so in the globalised world, yet translator training that is part of higher education programmes still depends heavily on the traditional, teacher-centred method of translator education.
• Due to different course and curricula requirements as well as assessment methods, students’ final work is marked individually, even though they have a chance to collaborate and work in pairs and groups in classes (House 1996, 2000)

• Thus, the responsibility and commitment the students show regarding the very process of collaboration and translation are affected to a great extent by the assessment methods, which might represent a challenge in the task-based approach which implies collaboration
All this does not leave enough space for the development of **translator’s creativity** and **intuition** or the **translator’s self-concept**, to use Kiraly’s (2000: 3) term, which ideally should be **constructed dynamically through communication and interaction while working in collaborative tasks**.
Formal educational context puts more emphasis on the development of specific language skills and translator competences, than on upgrading personal and team working skills that will increase students’ employability prospects.

Gouadec (2007: 331): university training often does not meet the requirements of the job market, which demands both entrepreneurial values and competences (Vandepitte 2009, Arnó Macià et al. 2014), intercultural awareness and knowledge (Cleary et al. 2018)
Aims of the study

✔ To modify a specific translation course to integrate practical (traditional/contact) classes with online collaboration in order to cater for the needs of students, instructors and stakeholders

✔ To identify major challenges in the process of course design and implementation and to try to address them in this specific situation
Aims of the study

• To create a student virtual team collaboration project in order to observe the collaborative process of translation and learn more about the factors that have an impact on collaboration within the teams, particularly in the domain of decision-making and problem solving tasks;
• to explore the quality of the online interaction between the participants of the study in order to evaluate the quality of this learning experience;
Background

**Course: Translation from Serbian (L1) into English (L2)**

- Obligatory/BA level /part of the course *Integrated Language Skills (ILS)*, for students taking English Language and Literature Degree at Department of English Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad
Objectives

- Following Garrison & Kanuka (2004) and Garrison& Vaughan (2008), a blended course was created that integrated practical classes in the classroom and online collaboration.
- The aim was to use a problem-based approach to develop students’ translation and editing skills as well as to enhance their team work skills by integrating online and face-to-face interaction.
Methodology and data collection

• 60 second-year undergraduate students participated in the course in the academic year 2017/2018
• We used interactive whiteboard with Smart Technology and Edmodo for lectures/posting specific tasks/presentations and the wiki website EditMe and Google Docs for sharing feedback and documents
• The course lasted 24 weeks and after the final assessment the students evaluated the course and the whole process
• Contact hours were used for summarizing progress and guidance
Methodology and data collection

• The students were selected for teams randomly and they organized their work on their own and assigned different roles within their teams
• The students had to establish a shared virtual workspace with their colleagues in order to collaborate and provide peer feedback
• Most opted for the social network Facebook Messenger, and for sharing documents, comments and feedback they used e-mails, Google docs and EditMe
Data collection

The data was obtained using:

- Observation
- Interviews
- Product analysis (the translations students did)
- Questionnaires (Likert-type scale)

The results were calculated using descriptive statistics based on the percentage share within the structures of the categories
Results

The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with the students, leads to the following conclusions:

• Overall, they were satisfied with the quantity and quality of their virtual collaboration
• They did not report any problems with communication
• The instructor had the advantage of increasing the amount of time spent on clarifying some problematic issues
Students’ Preferences (based on the questionnaire)

- They enjoyed working collaboratively

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**Pie Chart**
- Yes: 63%
- No: 37%
Blended learning had a positive impact on students' motivation.
Preferences related to the device they used

- Smart phones 89%
- PCs 11%
Most students opted to use mobile phones instead of PCs for the following reasons they listed:

- Practical reasons
- Access to Wifi
- Dictionaries, PPTs, and other materials
- Working on the go
The quality of their collaboration

- The quality of the feedback and comments changed in time as the tasks became more demanding and students realized that they had to cooperate in order to provide the best possible version of the translated text.
- Each team seemed to have their own pace and frequency of interactions, depending on their working style.
- Contact classes turned out to be the continuation of some ongoing discussions that were taking place in the virtual space.
At the beginning of the collaboration, some of the students reported that their team members were rather slow and reluctant to offer suggestions and comments, but as the deadline was approaching, they sped up and managed to get the information they needed.

These findings are in line with some previous studies in this field (Coughlan 2004, López-Pérez et al. 2011, Cleary et al. 2018).

Overall, it had a positive impact on their motivation judging by their answers, in line with previous research (Tseng & Walsh 2016).
Challenges

- Knowledge sharing, yet shared knowledge base was created
- The development of credibility of each team member
- Loyalty
- Collaborative vs. individual goals
- Responsibility
- Unequal contribution
Challenges

• The influence of the cultural context
• Stereotypical image of a translator working on his own
• Creating community of practice
• Increasing the individual responsibility of students towards the learning process
• Emotional support provided in the traditional setting: dealing with insecurities
Concluding remarks

• In order to modify and adjust the existing curricula and syllabi at the institutions of higher education, it is obvious that more blended courses should be offered, in particular if we want to encourage millennials to collaborate and increase their attention span and focus devoted to some time-consuming processes, such as translation or proof-reading.
Concluding remarks

• Using blended learning and combining it with collaborative work had a positive impact on students’ learning motivation, as they were paying more attention to peer assessment and evaluation

• There are still some challenges that need to be worked on to increase the benefits

• Blended learning opens a path to the establishment of a community of practice which is essential in any kind of knowledge management, particularly in translation
References

• Arnó Macià, Elisabet et al. (2014) “Enhancing students’ skills in technical writing and LSP translation through tele-collaboration projects: Teaching students in seven nations to manage complexity in multilateral international collaboration”, in Languages for Special Purposes in a Multilingual, Transcultural World, Proceedings of the 19th European Symposium on Languages for Special Purposes, 8–10 July 2013, Vienna, Austria, Gerhard Budin and Vesna Lušicky (eds.), Vienna: University of Vienna, 249-59.


