WAYS TO DEVELOP EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN TEACHING TRANSLATION TO FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS

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This paper considers methodology and pedagogical approaches used in higher education in the United Kingdom and Russia in developing transferable employability skills when teaching final-year undergraduates. The paper analyses outcomes of introducing innovative approaches to teaching translation at the University of Bristol and at Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU).

The MSU approach is aimed at the development of self-motivation, continual learning, ability to influence others through effective communication while at the same time developing students' discipline-related skills in the field of translation studies.

The innovation introduced at the University of Bristol involves a move from traditional classroom-based delivery of a final-year undergraduate translation module to a blended e-learning approach, thus addressing organisational needs (developing an effective mechanism of peer assessment in large translation classes) while achieving a higher quality of work and developing valuable employability skills.

The primary objective is to show the students that they can improve their translation and analytical skills through conducting research online and by interacting with the other members of the group using a virtual learning environment. Recent results confirm that both approaches proved to be extremely beneficial. The students developed a better awareness of what is expected of them in assessed assignments. They enhanced their discipline-related skills in the field of translation studies. Their communication skills, ability to provide constructive feedback and analyse their own and other students' work have also significantly improved. This contributed to the development of transferable employability skills including working as part of a team, critical thinking, communicating and influencing, problem solving, decision making and time management.

Key words: transferable employability skills, blended learning, peer assessment, peer feedback, peer learning, self-motivation, continual learning, virtual learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of universities is to provide highly skilled and employable graduates to society. What can be done to improve students' employability? Conference Resolution on Skills for Improved Productivity, Employment Growth and Development [Resolution on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development, 2008] points out that … "the employability skills, knowledge and competencies enhance a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, to progress at work and to be able to cope with changes, to secure another job if he/she so wishes and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of the life cycle, individuals are most employable when they have broad-based education and training, basic and transferable high-level skills, including teamwork and problem solving, IT skills, as well as communication skills. This combination of skills enables them to adapt to changes in the world of work" [Ibid., p 1-7].

"Lifelong learning is a form of unemployment insurance: it reduces the risk of employment prospects being tied to technologies and products that become obsolete.

Skills development is central to both of these objectives. In order to achieve the first objective, the workforce must be "employable", that is, capable of learning new technologies and workplace practices, engaging in social dialogue and participating in opportunities for continued learning." [Ibid., p 6]

What employability skills are considered important in the modern world? A number of major international companies compiled a list of top 10 employability skills which help successful candidates to get promoted or secure a job offer [Clawson, 2014; Cukier, Hodson, Omar, 2015]. These include communication and interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, being self-motivated [Farrell, 2015], ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines, being a team-player, organisational skills, ability to learn and continually develop, critical thinking, decision making and negotiation skills.

One could argue that employment opportunities to a significant extent depend on specific discipline-related skills acquired by students during their studies at university. However, according to Fanny Chouc and Elisa Calvo, students can either: 1) become passive containers of knowledge attained by humanity so far (purely academic model), 2) become highly qualified professionals who fit in different existing productive profiles (purely vocational model) or 3) become empowered individuals who are useful for the society and can manage transformation and innovation (progressive skills-based model). The three models are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A combination of these paradigms translates into a long-term efficient approach to employability in Higher Education which benefits society and the individual equally [Chouc & Calvo, 2019].

In order to address the needs of graduates and to enhance their employability skills necessary in the modern society, a number of methods and techniques have been developed. Below the authors of this article analyze two different approaches, both of which have proven to be successful in helping students to become a capable workforce.

METHODS AND RESULTS (1)

An approach to facilitate the development of *employability skills* has been applied by Alexandra Anisimova, Professor of the English Department, Faculty of Philology, Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU).

The core competences actively sought by employers in Russia are similar to those in the United Kingdom and include time management, decision making, effective oral and written communication skills, ability to influence others, self-motivation, continual learning, and development [Harvey, 2001; DiMartino, Castaneda, 2007].

Alexandra Anisimova has created a specific approach within the existing curriculum which addresses above all the employability skills that would allow graduates to be highly employable in modern society.

Within the format of the Lomonosov Moscow State University BA academic programme, Alexandra Anisimova has chosen a unit comprising weekly optional research seminars (a group of 5 to 9 students) which allows to address the individual needs of students and to develop certain transferable employability skills by justifying the need for and benefits of continuous professional development.

Academic programmes at MSU are intensive and challenging, so prof. Anisimova strived to find a format which would combine research into the translation theory and practice, and which would also ensure adequate supervision of students presenting and analyzing their translation case studies. During these classes, students participate in discussions, prepare reports and presentations, share best translation practices, and peer-assess each other's work. Students are encouraged to conduct research and resolve translation challenges under the guidance of their research supervisor. The aim is to create a friendly environment and to ensure that students are aware of the fact that they can count on the ongoing individual support provided by their research supervisor.

What is meant by 'sensitive' and 'individual support' in this case? For example, it is universally acknowledged that discussion benefits all students since, in theory, all students are effectively drawn in and take great interest in debates concerning subjects of their major interest or specialisation within their degree programme, in asking questions on various translation challenges, and clarification of issues linked to their case studies. Discussions will teach students to listen to each other's points of view and to develop an ability to influence others. However, in real life, a handful of individuals may dominate in a group discussion, and this is where the research supervisor decides on the composition of the team for the next round-table discussion. The solution is to set a translation challenge which will be difficult for students who usually monopolise discussions but will be within the scope of interest of others who need to be encouraged to take part in the discussion. Consequently, the research supervisor controls and changes the composition of teams several times during the term so that students can not only get to know each other better, but also acquire more profound knowledge in various fields of study, keep an open mind, and offer their solutions to contribute to problem solving and decision making while working in a team [Wong, 2001].

Moreover, while working in teams, students also develop skills as communication, rapport-building, decision-making and influencing skills. Collaborative learning in a team is of great importance. Thus, another target is to help them in overcoming obstacles, and to guide them in improving their performance. Self-motivated learners actively process information and resources available to them in order to obtain new knowledge and new skills. When choosing issues for round-table team discussions, the research supervisor's aim is to get the students interest in, for example, classical views on translation. Certain texts are selected for team commentary and translation. The round table team discussions cover a wide range of issues which are optional for students:
   – Views on translation in relation to poetry, language and rhetoric in Ancient Rome;
   – Contribution of Lucius Livius Andronicus to translation and Roman culture;
   – Early Bible translations into different languages;

– The Septuagint. St Jerome and the Vulgate;

– Translation in the Middle Ages in relation to education;

– Views *for* and *against* translation ('Dialogue of a Lord and a Clerk' by John of Trevisa; Roger Bacon);

– George Chapman: poet and translator;

– Alexander Pope and his translation of the Iliad;

– German views on translation (late 18th-early 19th century). Johann Wolfgang Goethe and his translation principles.

The approach has proved beneficial for the professional development of students since it is based on the discussions of professional issues and on observations of a fellow student's work; it calls for independent reading for students' individual research; it promotes learning via a peer-to-peer assessment.

The overall goal is to create a specific environment for every student which contributes to their comprehension of the main self-motivation factors. This model is a personalised approach to teaching which takes into consideration the students' learning needs.

This model has been in use for several years and has proved to be indispensable for students. The course starts with careful planning and discussion of deadlines for coursework submission. The goal can be achieved by ensuring that students follow a structured schedule of work which enhances the development of their time-management skills.

Theoretical issues discussed during seminars derive from either lectures or bibliographical sources [Lefevere,1993; Leonardi, 2007; Malmkjaer, 2005; Munday, 2000; Pym, 2010; Toury, 1995], as well as certain translation case studies. Marking criteria for peer assessment, compiling a bibliographical note or a reference list can also be incorporated into group discussions [House, 1997].

While conducting research, the students need to identify specific translation problems [Vandepitte, 2008, pp. 569-588; East & Scott, 2011; Gibb, 2014]; to indicate all the factors that should be taken into account when solving the problem [Jakobson, 2000; Holmes, 2000]; to list all the possible translation techniques; to recommend the most suitable translation for the case; to suggest the appropriate translation and to recommend websites and programmes [Black, Wiliam, 1998; Kechagias, 2011, pp. 115-117; Robles, 2012, pp. 453-465; Wei Ren, 2008]. Students are encouraged to make presentations and reports and to share everything they consider important with fellow students.

Team research results in individual research and writing final-year undergraduate degree projects and MA dissertations, for example, "Functioning and Translation of Musical Terms: a Case Study of Alex Ross' book "The Rest is Noise: Listening to the 20-s"; "Domestication and Foreignization in Translations of Michail Bulgakov's Novel "Master and Margarita"; "Typology and Translation of the English Terminology in Legal Contracts"; "Neologisms in Political Discourse: A Case Study of American and English Quality Press"; "Translation Problems in Civil Law Terminology"; "Functioning and Translation of the Political Terms in the Novel by Frederick Forsyth "The Day of the Jackal"; "Linguopoetic Comparison of English Poetry and Translations into Russian"; "'Translation False Friends' and Optimization Ways of Learning".

Independent study papers, in their turn, result in Ph.D. dissertations: "Contrastive Analysis of Translation Equivalents English Economic Terms in Language and Speech"; "Development of English Criminal Law Terminology and the Reflection of this Process in Translation"; "English Maritime Law Terms: Typological and Lexicographic Study".

Thus, such transferable skills as communication, teamwork, negotiation and persuasion, problem solving, leadership, organisation and time management, perseverance and self-motivation have been addressed and developed within the model described above.

METHODS AND RESULTS (2)

The project discussed below by Elena McNeilly (Language Director for Russian and Czech Studies, School of Modern Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Bristol) represents a model designed in an attempt to move from traditional classroom-based delivery of the Guided Writing programme (including translation into Russian), taught to final-year undergraduates studying for a BA Degree in Russian at the University of Bristol, to a blended-e-learning course which combines traditional classroom-based seminars and online teaching. It was developed primarily to respond to students' needs which should eventually lead to answering organisational needs i.e., developing an effective mechanism of peer assessment in Guided Writing classes and at the same time achieving a higher quality of work as well as developing transferable employability skills. It builds on Elena McNeilly's previous experience which was outlined in 2012 in her case study "A blended approach to teaching translation" [McNeilly, 2012].

The academic goals were to create "a sustained community of inquiry that extends beyond limited classroom opportunities and to reduce lecturing while increasing inquiry and discourse" [Harrison and Vaughan, 2008, p. 72].

The course was traditionally delivered via a weekly one-hour seminar, supported by the distribution of extensive handouts: key topical vocabulary, a source text, lexical, syntactic, and grammatical analysis of students' written work, some theoretical considerations, marking criteria, bibliography, etc. Students were asked to translate and submit ten handwritten practice pieces per academic year. This was followed by a final written examination in the summer. The weekly classroom discussion was based on the analysis of students' translation of the source text and at times was dominated by the same four or five individuals, with less confident students avoiding taking part in discussions. What can be done to motivate all students, rather than a handful of individuals, to take part in classroom discussions? What will be the best way to address different levels of students' cognitive activity?

Elena McNeilly decided to move away from a conventional teacher-centred 'mode': she updated the design of the unit to ensure that "the students do the real work, and the teacher simply acts as broker between the student and the learning environment that supports the appropriate learning activities" [Biggs, 2003: 27].
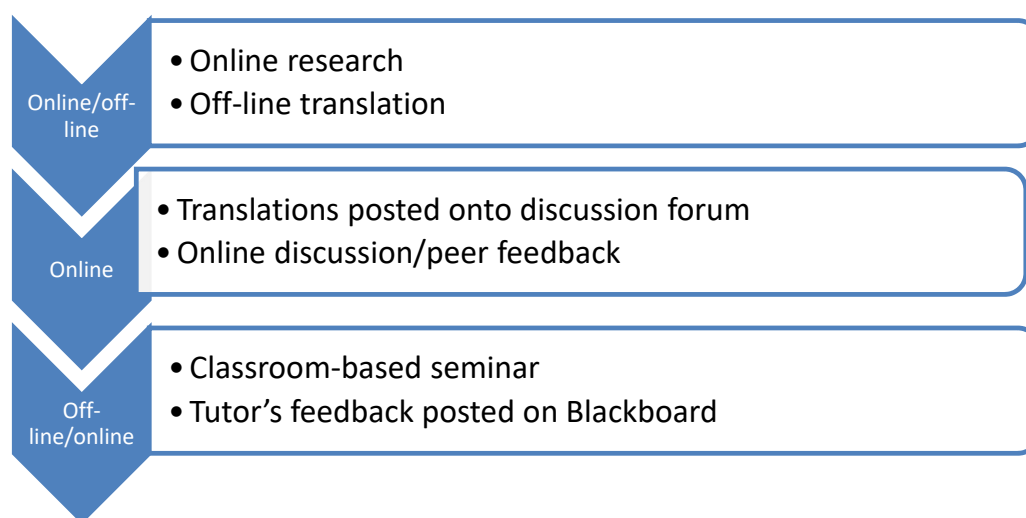
The blended e-learning Guided Writing unit features:

– elements of personalisation (that could prove problematic within the

traditional set-up: a group of 20 students taught on a weekly basis).

– advice on using a range of carefully selected internet-based resources to carry out research to develop translation strategies and to enhance overall competence as translators.

– students' reflection on their own practice and that of others in the group through using online discussion forums followed by informed classroom-based discussions.

– continuous tutor's support and guidance both online and in the classroom.

– most issues are resolved through peer interaction online (moderated by the tutor), while the 'round-up' classroom-based seminar at the end of the weekly cycle clears up the remaining issues.

Littlejohn and Pegler state that the word 'blended' implies "a seamless integration or intermingling of e-learning and conventional teaching approaches", and "to achieve that level of seamless integration would require remaking the courses from scratch, creating a precise balance and blend of media use across the course from the earliest design stage". They warn that "the experience for learners and educators is often not finely blended but somewhat 'lumpy' with the joins between the newer e-learning and older established material being apparent to students. Where there is a lack

of confidence in e-learning, those sections of the course may be presented and identified to learners as optional extras or experiments (e.g., an additional on-line conference in which participation is invited but not required or recognised)". They suggest that "a more elegant solution is to wrap one approach around another, for example using conventional teaching to wrap around e-learning resources or extending traditional approaches by wrapping these around e-learning activity" [Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007, p. 30].

Having carefully considered the options, Elena McNeilly has chosen to wrap online work around off-line resources:

Online/off-line	• Online research • Off-line translation
Online	• Translations posted onto discussion forum • Online discussion/peer feedback
Off-line/online	• Classroom-based seminar • Tutor's feedback posted on Blackboard

"Technology can be used to allow students a wider audience for their assessed work than is commonly available in traditional assessment contexts. This means that they have access to multiple sources of feedback from peers rather than just the one tutor, which in itself can lead to enhanced understanding and self-awareness" [Harvey, 2001]. Elena McNeilly's objective is to try to show the students that they can learn more about translation not only in class but also through conducting research online and through interacting with the other members of the group using the Discussion forum on Blackboard (virtual learning environment used at the University of Bristol).

Students are encouraged to develop translation strategies, use a variety of internet-based language resources and learn to evaluate their own and other students' work. One of the course objectives is to help learners in enhancing their critical and reflective skills. The essential element of the course is peer feedback and comments on each other's work, asking questions, pointing out successful solutions and making suggestions on issues they would have handled differently.

As Michael Wride points out in his 'Guide to Peer-Assessment', "…there are great opportunities and advantages, in terms of understanding and engagement, to learners providing feedback on and assessing each other's work. Using and/or developing assessment criteria takes students deeper into their learning and allows for feedback and reflection on learning and the sharing of what new meaning appears" [Wride, 2017, p. 2].

This leads not only to enhanced awareness of expectations linked to a specific assessment but to supporting students in the development of transferable skills which would be of use for future employment, in addition to discipline-related skills, in this case of language and translation.

"Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but graduates also require demonstrating a range of broader, transferable skills and attributes" [Lowden, Hall, Elliot & Lewin, 2011].

Throughout the unit the tutor emphasises how the activities which students undertake are helping to develop the following transferable skills and attributes actively sought by employers. Clawson points out that "today, the credential a student earns, and the institution's brand serve as the primary ways institutions signal to employers that students are career-ready. Foundational skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving are climbing to the top of employers' wish lists" [Clawson, 2014, p. 8]. Other core competences actively sought by employers include time management, decision making, effective oral and written communication skills, ability to influence others, continual learning, and development.

At the start of the course students are asked to get to know the timetable for the term which is permanently displayed on the Announcements page on Blackboard (the virtual learning platform). The timetable shows strict submission dates for practice pieces as well as Blackboard discussion timeframes. The students can also see how long they can spend discussing and commenting on each other's work. Students work in teams of four and each team is sub-divided into pairs. Team composition is changed three times over the period of 11 weeks so that students can get to know various approaches and diverse learning styles. Within each team, students post their translations on scheduled dates, ask questions, share ideas and comment on other people's work. The tutor supports and moderates all online discussions and steps in to help if there are any issues.

Students learn how to give constructive feedback on each other's translations and exchange opinions on how they go about tackling various challenges. They comment on things they liked and on issues they would deal with differently. They make interesting suggestions and share useful sites and resources.

As Russian language speakers, students may be asked by their future employers to do some editing and/or revision. When editing their partner's translation, the students refer to the assessment criteria, and if they find an error, they correct it and clearly state in brackets if it has to do with lexical, grammatical, or syntactic accuracy. While working on this task, students also learn how to use the track changes function in Word which is an important skill in editing and proofreading. At the end, they award a grade and write brief feedback summarising what they think went well and which areas could be improved. While aimed primarily at enhancing the discipline-related skills, this activity helps to develop critical thinking and decision-making, the transferable skills which are highly valued by employers.

Students learn about translation not only in class but also through conducting research online and by interacting with the other members of the group using the Discussion forum. Students are encouraged to develop translation strategies, use a variety of internet-based language resources and learn to evaluate their own and other students' work. One of the course objectives is to help learners to enhance their critical and reflective skills. Peer feedback through online interaction is a good example of how these skills are developed: students learn to point out successful solutions and make constructive suggestions on issues they would have handled differently.

Discipline-related and generic transferable skills sought by employers are discussed at the start of the course and are looked at again in the final seminar when students' achievements are summed up. Students reflect on particular skills they feel they developed and enhanced over the period of this course. Students comment on achieving a better awareness of what is expected of them in assessed tasks. They improve translation skills and enhance their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Time management, ability to work as part of the team as well as communication skills and analysis of their own and other students' work also significantly improve. Students become much more confident in using online resources and conducting pre-translation research through learning from each other. It is important to mention that recently a number of students

have used examples of work they have done on this unit in applying for jobs and doing interviews, helping them with successful applications.

It should also be noted that this blended learning Guided Writing course design was piloted by Elena McNeilly at the University of Bristol prior to the current pandemic crisis. In 2020-2021, the blended learning approach to teaching has become almost universal. The teaching methods and techniques analysed in this paper are now key to the approach combining online and on-campus teaching practice which universities across the world adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

The authors have analysed teaching approaches and techniques aimed at supporting learning which is focused on peer-learning activities and on the development of both discipline-related and transferable employability skills.

By encouraging peer collaboration, the authors have made their students realise that they are in control of their own success. Students note that their time management, ability to work as part of a team, as well as communication skills and analysis of their own and other students' work, significantly improve. They become much more confident in using online resources and conducting research through learning from each other.

Students learn to be in charge of the whole process of learning through research, both collaboratively and individually, through group debate, in a physical classroom environment and online. By facilitating peer feedback, the authors prepare their students to be proactive in their learning. This proves to be of great benefit to final-year students once they graduate. It helps them to find gainful employment where they will be able to use the transferable skills analysed in this paper.

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