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Abstract

Optimizing translator training and student employability through project-based learning: The case of the IATE terminology project¹

Terminology and terminography, although under-researched, form key competencies for professional translators and interpreters in multilingual and multimedia settings (EMT expert group). Particularly, terminology, i.e. the study and analysis of terms as concepts has gradually started to infiltrate translator training and pedagogy as it has been observed that it plays a considerable role in the professional lives of translators. This contribution wishes to foreground the increasingly central role of terminology in translator training. To do that, it presents the IATE project rolling out by students in the Master of Arts in Translation program in cooperation with the terminology coordination unit of the European Parliament (TERMCOORD). The aims of the project are three: first the project aims to present an optimal example of a good practice towards professionalization and employability enhancement of graduate students, one that reinvents the ties between academic institutions and other industry stakeholders. As gradually more and more employers are seeking for evidence-based results to assess how employable and ready-for-the-market students are, this project forms a good practice to showcase ways of making them employable for the translation industry and Language Service Provision. Secondly, it aims at showing the applicability of terminology for translator training and development. Although terminology and terminography are interdisciplinary in nature and can potentially prove beneficial areas for other disciplinary domains, they remain grounded on a concept-based theory orientation which requires training on terminology theory. Transferability of terminological competence, however, is possible to other disciplines particularly if combined with some theory-based training. Thirdly, it aims to reveal the potential of learning through interaction and engagement; it shows how students are engaged in terminographical work that includes compiling domain-specific glossaries. The project foregrounds how students learn to conduct terminographical research by engaging with thematic experts and establishing links with industry stakeholders. Other elements highlighted also include the interactivity between students and project coordinators.

Keywords: terminology, terminography, employability, project-based training, student engagement

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1. Introduction

This contribution wishes to foreground the increasingly central role of terminology in graduate translation programs in EU in the pressing context of an exponentially growing translation industry. It does so by describing translation and terminology/terminography through a project-based learning environment (PBL) rolling out in the context of a graduate translation program at Hellenic American University. One aspect underscored in this paper is the persistent need for even more cooperation between the academia and other stakeholders with an aim to have students be as prepared as possible for a technologically streamlined and fast paced market, that of Language Service Provision. As a whole, the discussion put forward in this paper showcases the practical applicability of integrating in the curriculum projects with industry and other stakeholders in the field as a means to enhance employability opportunities of graduates and make them market-ready.

One of the dimensions that this paper discusses is the importance, benefits and key relevance of integrating Project-Based Learning (Diehl, W., Grobe, T., Lopez, H., & Cabral, C. 1999), in a graduate terminology classroom in a University environment. Project-Based Learning has been defined as “as a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks”². In this sense, it is a student-centered approach that prioritizes project and task-based learning and therefore can be seen as very much linked with employability and market-based preparation. Research on project-based learning (Thomas 2000) has been increasingly placing emphasis on how the latter is used to motivate and engage students who are given the chance to develop self-reliance and work with minimal supervision over extended periods of time. Experts have been insisting on the idea that it is through the benefits of Project-Based Learning and primarily through the introduction of different levels of "scaffolding" (different training methods, apprentices) that students learn and become experts in conducting work and are prepared to lead activities inside and outside the classroom environment. In this context, students who are immersed in project-based learning gradually engage with activities that are very much similar to those of the market.

In this project, students are introduced to PBL through a project that is conducted in cooperation with the Terminology Coordination Unit (TermCoord), a supporting unit to the translation units of the Directorate-General for Translation (DG TRAD). In section 3 below more details are provided in

² <https://www.bie.org/images/uploads/general/20fa7d42c216e2ec171a212e97fd4a9e.pdf>

regards to the structure of the project, the workflow, QA and validation processes before it can address the employability potential for students engaging in the project.

2. Project context: on IATE and Termcoord

The context, and general setting within which Research on Project-Based Learning is taking place can be a key factor for (REFERENCE) for the success of a project. Many call this “situated cognition,” learning which is interpreted as a factor for facilitating the simulation of learning that resembles the real-life context. The context for this project that students at Hellenic American University are conducting is that of the IATE environment and TERMCOORD. This is not without importance; on the contrary, the organizational and institutional culture (REFERENCE) of the organizing institution can play a pivotal role in how a project is rolling out and the extent of its success with student engagement.

IATE³ is the EU's inter-institutional terminology database; it has been operational since 2004 and has been consistently used in the EU institutions and agencies managing and sharing domain-wide, EU-specific terminology. As it is a vast resource repository for terminology the public version receives on average 3500 queries per hour from the entire world and it is managed and fed by several EU Institutions, such as the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament⁴.

IATE was launched in 1999 with the objective of providing a web-based infrastructure for all EU terminology resources, enhancing the availability and standardization of the information and the Internet version now receives over 70 million queries a year. The IATE Management Group meets several times a year; in these meetings, the European Parliament is represented by TermCoord, the Terminology Coordination Unit.

3. Project scope and organization

The IATE terminology project is one of those high-impact synergies that Hellenic American University and the MA in Translation have been engaged in and which aim at providing students with increased learning and employability opportunities in a highly competitive in the 4.0 industrial

³ <http://iate.europa.eu>

⁴ Partners of the IATE project include the Court of Justice, Court of Auditors, Economic & Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, European Central Bank, European Investment Bank and the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU

revolution. It gives students the opportunity to contribute to IATE by decoding⁵ terminology from English into Greek and allowing then IATE to populate the base with new terminology together with its metadata (definition, context, context reference, synonyms) that has not been submitted before in Greek. In this way, students actively participate in the dissemination of terminological knowledge.

The aims of the project are three-fold:

- a) present an optimal example of a good practice towards professionalization and employability enhancement, the ties between academic institutions and other industry stakeholder, with as a result employable and ready-for-the-market students;
- b) showcase the applicability of terminology for translator training and development. Terminology and Terminography remain grounded on a concept-based theory orientation which requires training on terminology theory remain grounded on a concept-based theory orientation which requires training on terminology theory;
- c) reveal the potential of learning through interaction and engagement in the context of a Project-Based Environment, by including the compilation of domain-specific glossaries. IATE allows students to download⁶ and integrate in their computer assisted translation systems, thematic glossaries which, in turn, assist with terminology consistency.

This project ultimately offers insights as to how hands-on, student-directed learning can have a positive effect on student engagement and success. In the next section, we explain the context of the project, the organization, its benefits and talk about potential spin offs.

3.1. Structure of the Project, participants and outcomes

TERMCOORD is placing emphasis on the organization of the project and has allocated resources to support the cooperation with various universities across Europe working on similar projects. The project has two phases: phase one, the implementation phase and phase two the validation phase. The implementation phase includes a kick-off meeting where the Coordinator of the Project introduces the project to students and provides them with the thematic area from where the terms will come. Also,

⁵ Decoding of terminology relates to the “presentation of terms” (Sager, 1990:3) that spans from collection, retrieval of equivalents in the target language together with their associated data i.e. definition, context and reference sources for each one of these.

⁶ <http://termcoord.eu/iate/download-iate-tbx/>

they learn about the different requirements, needs and deadlines and are provided with the necessary forms.

Terminology is allocated to students top-down i.e. from TERMCOORD to students through the coordinator. This top-down approach is selected as it assists singling out those terminological units that are of particular interest to IATE and which have not been analysed before. Different thematic domains are allocated every year based on the needs of IATE for terminology. Table 1 below illustrates the terms assigned to students for the current rolling out of the project. The domain selected is that of waste management.

3528505	end of waste criteria
3530061	waste-derived material
3530069	recycling society
3533916	granular waste
3534507	waste water stripper
3541395	waste sector
3541790	ready for recycling certificate
3544281	waste intensity
3551170	controlled incineration
3559421	upcycling
3561223	downcycling
3562050	zero waste
3562412	mechanical biological treatment
3562412	MBT
3563735	non-separable plastic fraction
3564211	solid recovered fuel
3565226	green-listed waste
3565227	amber-listed waste

Table 1: list of terms assigned to students from IATE.

Terms are accompanied by their IATE number i.e. a number assigned to each term which then corresponds to the databased entry.

To better understand the positioning of the terms within the field or thematic domain in which they pertain, IATE is providing us with a mind map⁷ which illustrates the breakdown of domains as they are “hanging out” and branch out from overarching thematic categories used by IATE to categorize and index terminology. This mind map ensures that students understand fully the so-called master-domains (e.g. environment) and the associated sub-domains. Thematic understanding is key to the success of the project since it assists research methodologies to develop efficiently.

52 - ENVIRONMENT

5206 - Environmental policy

5206001 - Environmental protection

5206002 - Environmental policy

5206003 - Pollution control measures

5206004 - Waste management

5206005 - Water management

5206006 - Climate change policy

5216 - Deterioration of the environment

5216001 - Degradation of the environment

5216002 - Nuisance

5216003 - Pollution

5216004 – Waste

Figure 1: Domain-specific mind map for waste management

The implementation phase also includes completion of the data entry form. This form is the first form that students fill out with terminology together with their associated data. All terms need to be accompanied by their respective definition, context and context references. This information is

⁷ Mindmap is accessible online at: <https://framindmap.org/c/maps/273493/public>

necessary to indicate a) conceptual understanding of the term (definition), b) usability of the term in different contexts and registers (formal, informal etc.) and validation of usability and conceptual delineation of the term (references for definition and context).

Phase 2 includes the evaluation of result by TERMCOORD experts. Evaluation is performed using the entry forms submitted by students during phase one and it is taking into consideration areas such as

- i) appropriateness of definition and relevance of this in respect to the term and thematic domain.
- ii) Scope and overall applicability of the contextual information provided. Terms that are provided with contexts that are not relevant to the thematic field or contexts which do not underscore the usability of the term and its penetration in a given field are singled out for further review.
- iii) Appropriateness of reference material provided
- iv) Term variants which exists but have not been adequately analysed and expanded

An interview with a thematic expert is also included in phase II. During this stage student meet with an expert from the Hellenic Solid Waste Management Association⁸ who is familiar with the assigned terms and who advises them on the usability and appropriateness of the terms. Interviewing an industry expert and engaging in a stock-taking exercise is a key step in making students more market-ready and bringing them closer to the applicable professional standards.

4. The IATE project as an optimal practice for student engagement and employability

The IATE project forms an optimal example of project-based learning for graduate translation students. Translator training has, traditionally, remained largely blind to industry needs for training translators with project management skills and techniques. In the past years, however, the need for more connectivity between the academia and the translation industry has been underscored by different stakeholders (e.g. OPTIMALE project) and significant stock-taking has been taking place to highlight how industry needs could be addressed through curriculum changes. The IATE project is one such example of how both the industry and EU institutions. The IATE project presents increased learning opportunities to students as it i) introduces them to a project workflow and allows them to familiarize with dimensions of project management such as deadlines, ii) promotes communication with experts and industry stakeholders iii) presents an optimal example of phase segmentation in projects iv) allows them to presentation of results in a publicly available outlet.

⁸ <http://www.eedsa.gr/default.aspx?lang=en>

The Industrial revolution 4.0 necessitates, innovation and adaptability to the professional requirements of the market. In this framework project based learning can form a step before work based learning and full employability.

5. Conclusions and spin offs

Experience gained from rolling out three rounds of the IATE project with TERMCOORD has highlighted the need to design and integrate in university curricula project-based learning that connects the industry with the academia. For teaching to moving away from the traditional classroom environment it also needs synergies and activities that will involve the universities with institutions that can launch and run projects by engaging and empowering students to take decisive steps towards professionalization. Spin offs of this project can include project-based educational practices that take market demands and leverage graduate student experience and knowledge to collaboratively develop innovative pathways to student success.

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