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A Project-Based Approach in Translation Classroom: From the Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The project-based approach has been discussed as one of the most influential methods applied in translation pedagogy, which ensures the development of translation knowledge and skills of students by providing them with a chance of real-life experiences. In this study, a project-based learning model was applied with a constructivist training approach in a technical translation course offered to 30 3rd grade students studying at Translation and Interpreting Department at a university in the 2018-2019 academic year and the students' views were taken. To this end, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to evaluate whether the students improved their related knowledge and skills through this training method, and unstructured evaluation forms were collected to investigate the students' comments on their translation processes. The results demonstrated that the majority of the students believed that, with the application of the project-based learning approach, they improved their metacognitive knowledge and skills which are required to be competent translators who are in full awareness of their cognitive abilities.

Key Words: Constructivist learning, metacognition, translation skills, translation pedagogy, project-based learning.

Çeviri Eğitiminde Proje Temelli Yaklaşım: Öğrencilerin Görüşleri

ÖZET

Çeviri eğitiminde uygulanan proje temelli yaklaşımın, öğrencilere gerçek yaşam deneyimi sunarak onların çeviri bilgi ve becerilerini geliştiren en etkili yöntemlerden biri olduğu tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada 2018-2019 akademik yılında bir üniversitenin Mütercim Tercümanlık Lisans programına kayıtlı 30 kişiden oluşan 3. sınıf öğrencilerine verilen bir teknik çeviri dersi kapsamında yapılandırmacı eğitim yaklaşımı benimsenerek proje temelli öğrenme modeli uygulanmıştır ve öğrencilerin uygulamaya yönelik görüşleri alınmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, söz konusu yöntemin uygulanması sonucunda öğrencilerin ilgili bilgi ve becerileri geliştirip geliştirmediğini değerlendirdikleri 5'li Likert tipi sorulardan oluşan bir anket ve öğrencilerin bu yaklaşım süresince deneyimledikleri çeviri süreçlerine ilişkin yorumlarını içeren yapılandırılmamış değerlendirmeler incelenmiştir. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin çoğunluğunun proje temelli öğrenme yaklaşımı yoluyla, kendi bilişsel becerilerinin farkında uzman çevirmenler olmak için gerekli olan üstbilişsel bilgi ve becerilerine katkı sağladığı öğrenciler tarafından vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yapılandırmacı eğitim, üstbiliş, çeviri becerileri, çeviri eğitimi, proje temelli öğrenme.

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1. Introduction

The constructivist learning paradigm aptly defines learning as a social and active process which grounds on the involvement of the learners to construct knowledge themselves. The role of the teacher is acknowledged as helping learners know, unlike entrenched learning approaches that deem teacher as the ultimate acquainted, who is expected to offer all the knowledge. Translation education is embodied with the acquisition of translation knowledge and skills as well as providing students with translation practice in an interactive and social environment, considering the prerequisites of translation commission in the real-world. The two main components of translation pedagogy, namely translation knowledge, and translation expertise, are argued to be effectively ensured by collaborative and project-based learning methods through which future translators experience many aspects of translation tasks rather than a teacher-centered teaching environment. One of the studies discussing project-based learning within the scope of translation pedagogy was conducted by Kiraly (2005). Underlying the importance of real-world tasks undertaken by translation students, he offered an illustration of a project-based application performed in the field of subtitling and asserted that such training method offering an active learning environment can ensure to gain insight into the cognition and learning along with the translation process itself.

Gonzalez and Diaz (2015) also reported remarkable contributions of project-based learning in a technical translation course, such as greater awareness of students towards different text types, source, and target culture systems, text-related translation strategies as well as increased teamwork abilities, motivation, teacher-student, and student-student interaction. In parallel with this study, Li et al. (2015) revealed positive perceptions of translation students to project-based learning by stating improvement in a variety of skills such as technology use, critical thinking, working as a team, to name a few.

Enabling students to construct their experiences and learning procedures, the constructivist approach also provides students with metacognitive abilities such as acquiring field knowledge, self-assessment, self-monitoring and so on. The importance of metacognitive skills is highly emphasized in translation education (see Alves & Gonçalves, 2007; Angelone, 2010) due to the natural structure of a translation task, which requires constant self-awareness throughout the translation process starting with planning and ending with self-assessment. Zhu (2018) highlighted the significance of metacognitive abilities by stating that: "In view of the kaleidoscopic situations of translation problems, no one can prepare a full list of methods in advance for learners to tackle all possible problems. So the ability of self-discovery, self-study, and self-improvement in their career and community becomes essential to the translator's progress" (p.140).

In this sense, it is believed that translation programs, undertaking the role of raising future translators equipped with the skills mentioned above, should be planned and revised in terms of the acquisition of metacognitive skills. For instance, Shreve (2009) posited that such a complex task as translation cannot be fully understood without the consideration of the metacognitive abilities of both novice and expert translators. He highlights the recipient-orientation in translation, which can be defined as the common goal of creating a translation text which is close to the target readers. Accordingly, he put forward that the task of translators to produce recipient-oriented texts requires a high level of metacognitive ability as the understanding of not only translation process such as reading, comprehending, semantic transfer, etc., but also related strategies to be applied while considering the target audience, text type and other pragmatics of translation is needed to perform such a task.

In this study, the first section introduces the idea of the constructivist learning method and how it contributes to the metacognitive knowledge and skills of translation students by providing a literature review. The second section is dedicated to the theoretical background on the development of metacognitive knowledge and skills in translation pedagogy through a project-based approach, as well as the statement of the aim of the study. The third Section dwells upon the methodology, in which the research design, participants, and materials are explained. The findings and results of the study are presented quantitatively and qualitatively in the fourth section. Finally, section five offers the discussion and conclusion of the research, respectively.

Theoretical background

The constructivist philosophy of education, based on the psychosocial learning theory asserted by Vygotsky (1962, 1978) emphasizes that learning is constructed in the learner's cognition rather than being transferred from teacher, and suggests that learning can be achieved best when it is actively participated by the learners as the inert skills and knowledge of the students are activated. In a traditional training environment, students are expected to follow the given instructions to complete the translation task keeping in mind the assessment criteria of the instructor, who is the final reader of the translated task. In such an environment, the cognitive awareness of students can be claimed to be towards the approval of the instructor. However, a social and interactive learning model based on the constructivist approach can allow students to be aware of their cognitive processes as well as to be in control of them.

Considering the fundamental tasks of translation such as reading in a native and/or foreign language, comprehending a specialized text and transferring the acquired meaning into another linguistic and cultural system by taking the target audience into account, it can be claimed that metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive skills are indispensable components of any translation activities. In addition to linguistic knowledge, domain knowledge, cultural knowledge, and the related procedural knowledge, translation competence is a constant decision-making process of eliminating the alternatives (Pym, 2003, p. 491) ranging from choosing suitable terminology to contemplating cultural sensitivities of the target audience. In this sense, translators are assumed to exhibit metacognition skills throughout the translation process. Shreve (2009) listed translation pragmatics that requires metacognitive skills (e.g. planning, evaluation, and control of the process) as target audience, mutual knowledge, intent, purpose, function, and communicative effect, pragmatic task variables and translation commission. Accordingly, any translation task bears a high number of variables that are needed to be consciously evaluated by a translator at the metacognitive level. The success of the translation activity therefore can be affiliated with promoting the metacognitive skills of the translator.

This, on the one hand, entails the awareness of constructing such skills and knowledge which is the core of metacognitive abilities. Flavell defined metacognition as "the individual's own awareness and consideration of his or her cognitive processes and strategies" (qtd. in Fisher, 1998, p.1). As stated in this definition, metacognition is formed by two main components, namely consciousness, and control on thinking. Paris and Winograd (1990), based on these two components, divide metacognitive abilities into "metacognitive knowledge" and "metacognitive regulation". Metacognitive knowledge constitutes the knowledge about a subject/field and skills (declarative knowledge) as well as about when/why to use the acquired information and skills (contextual knowledge) and how to use them (procedural knowledge). Metacognitive regulation, also known as metacognitive skills, refers to planning, monitoring and evaluating (Veenman, 2011, p.198). For instance, monitoring the ongoing process to

detect and solve possible problems, planning the strategies and resources to be applied to the given task, and the self-evaluation can be given examples of metacognitive skills.

This study designs an interactive learning environment with a project-based model in which translation of the given tasks was carried out by a team including three members with different roles, being a terminologist, a translator and a proofreader. After the completion of the translation task, the texts were submitted to another group, this time they acted as editors to check the translation in terms of accuracy, consistency, terminology use, grammar, punctuation and spelling rules. This model, rather than the individual working of students, can be a good example to create a socially active learning environment. This model contributes to metacognitive knowledge acquisition of students since they acquire;

a) declarative knowledge; students acquire knowledge of the subject of the given task in a certain field (e.g. main characteristics of technical discourse, genre, terminology)

b) contextual knowledge; students learn when and why to apply their acquired information in the translation process (e.g. taking into consideration source and target culture norms)

c) procedural knowledge; students actively put their knowledge into action by translating within the actual translation process.

Such a project-based approach to translation tasks also enables students to develop metacognitive skills by steering them to;

a) planning; participants of the project are organized to handle the task (work-sharing for terminology extraction, translation and proof-reading), identify any possible problems with the given task (e.g. unknown terminology) and choose resources to overcome the problem (e.g. resorting to Web, dictionaries).

b) monitoring; participants question their comprehension about the given task (e.g. Is the technical discourse easily comprehended while translating the text?) and check whether the strategies applied during the activity are appropriate to the task (e.g. translation approach needs to be shifted to target-oriented).

c) evaluating; participants assess their task performance within their own project group by the proofreader, and also receive feedback through peer-assessment by the editor.

This project-based method is believed to require higher levels of cognitive awareness and improve metacognitive skills more than the traditional method of learning. Because, students working within a project in collaboration with others undertaking different roles of a translation task should keep thinking on their cognitive processes, as the implementations in a task will eventually affect the next step of the project as well as the overall translation activity. Besides, contrary to the traditional training environment where translations of the students are assessed ultimately by the instructor, peer-assessment is a crucial component of a project-based implementation. As Topping (2009) asserted "peer assessment can also increase reflection and generalization to new situations, promoting self-assessment and greater metacognitive self-awareness" (p.23). In this sense, peer-assessment is closely affiliated with the self-assessment which highly improves metacognitive evaluating skills.

Taking a stand from the theoretical background of the constructivist learning environment and its implications in translation pedagogy, this study aims to dwell upon the perspectives of the students on project-based applications in class.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were a total of 30 third-year undergraduate students from the Department of Translation and Interpretation at Atılım University in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. All the participants volunteered for the research, having successfully completed the ETI151 Text Studies for Translation, ETI203 Language Use in Various Fields and ETI200 Introduction to Translation courses which offered the theoretical background for text types put forth by Reiss (1981; 2000), textual functions, viable translation approaches for different text types, and fundamental terminology of each genre.

Training

The training was applied within the scope of the technical translation course which was offered for three hours each week. The training which involved the application of a project-based approach lasted for four weeks. In this process, the students were divided into ten groups. In each group, involving three students, each acting as a terminologist, a translator and a proofreader.

Each week, the groups completed their translation project and submitted their work to the evaluation of other groups. Each group offered peer-feedback to each other and marked all the errors and improvements required in the text. Throughout this procedure, the roles of the group members changed within the group. At the end of the four weeks, each group member experienced working as a terminologist, translator, proofreader as well as the evaluator.

Instruments

The first instrument is a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with seven items designed by the researchers to be delivered to the students to find out whether the training applied helped the students to acquire translation knowledge and skills. The questionnaire aims to evaluate whether the students mastered the related skills upon the completion of the course. The validity of the survey was affirmed by asking an expert opinion. The reliability of the survey was also tested and Cronbach's alpha value was found .94 indicating a high level of reliability.

The statements involved in the questionnaire are as the following;

1) I have learned the importance of complete transferring the source text information in the translation of technical texts.

2) I have learned to translate technical texts by taking into consideration of the target audience, source text genre, and features.

3) I have grasped the importance of translating in line with the accurate use of grammar.

4) I have learned the importance of fidelity to source text and accuracy in translation.

5) I have improved my knowledge of the use of technical terminology.

6) I have improved my knowledge of spelling and punctuation rules.

7) I have learned to pay attention to the translation of culture-specific items.

The second instrument is the unstructured evaluation form in which students used their words to comment on their own translation processes during the project-based method. The answers of the

students were later presented in Table 2 after grouping them as either positive or negative and interpreted qualitatively by providing randomly-selected comments.

Findings

Results of the Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire conducted after the project-based training are demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Results of the Questionnaire*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Statament 1	24	3	3	0	0
Statement 2	25	3	2	0	0
Statement 3	23	4	2	1	0
Statement 4	23	5	2	0	0
Statement 5	19	8	1	1	1
Statement 6	18	8	2	1	1
Statement 7	18	8	3	0	1
Total	150	39	15	3	3
Percentage	71.42%	18.57%	7.14%	1.42%	1.42%

Number of students answered the survey: 30

As it can clearly be observed from Table 1, 71.42% of the participants reported that they strongly agreed that they have learned the importance of complete transferring the source text information in the translation of technical texts; have learned to translate technical texts in consideration of target audience, source text genre, and features; have grasped the importance of translating in line with accurate use of grammar; have learned the importance of fidelity to source text and accuracy in translation; have improved my knowledge on the use of technical terminology; have improved my knowledge on the spelling and punctuation rule; I have learned to pay attention to the translation of culture-specific items and 18.57% agreed with these statements. Of all participants, 7.14% remained neutral while 1.42% disagreed and 1.42% strongly disagreed.

The majority of the students agreed that, at the end of this training, this learning approach helped students to comprehend the importance of complete transferring the source text information in translation of technical texts, translating technical texts in consideration of target audience, source text genre, and features, technical terminology, language use in technical texts, accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling rules, fidelity to source text and accuracy in translation.

Results of Unstructured Evaluation Form

Table 2 demonstrates the comments of the students on the benefits and drawbacks of the project-based approach, which reveals their awareness on the development of the specific skills with the help of such training.

Table 2. *Unstructured Evaluation Form Assessment*

Positive and Negative Comments		**# of Students**
Positive	Learning to work in a team	21
	Real-life experience	18
	Acquisition of terminology	16
	Having the chance to do self and peer evaluation	13
	Development of proofreading skills	9
	Development of research skills	8
	Development of grammatical skills	7
	Increase in subject knowledge	6
	Increase in the awareness of the importance of pre-translation process	5
	Increase in the awareness of the importance of genre analysis in translation	4
Negative	Limited role of instructor	3
	Limited time	2

As illustrated in Table 2, the most prominent advantage of the project-based approach in translation classes was that the students became aware of the importance of teamwork and it helped them to learn how to act in a group and share different roles such as terminologists, translators, editors, and proof-readers. One of these comments reads as follows:

"Involving in teamwork, which we are supposed to in real life, made me feel more responsible towards myself and my teammates and I became aware of the requirements of teamwork."

In this study, similar comments on learning how to act in teamwork make it clear that the students took advantage of the project-based approach which also provided them a real-life experience. On this subject, one comment was:

"This project-based approach helped me act as if I involved in a real translation project in which I could assume the roles of an editor, a proof-reader, a translator, or a terminologist."

Furthermore, Table 2 presented the fact that the acquisition of terminology was regarded as one of the most influential advantages of the project-based approach. Sixteen students shared the view that they had learned Latin and Greek terminologies, as well as English ones. One of these comments reads as follows:

"While translating the text or acting as a terminologist, I realized the importance of terminology knowledge and learned how to use terminologies properly according to the genre or the context."

Having chance to do peer and self-evaluation is another merit of the project-based approach conducted in translation classes and 13 of the students shared the belief that through peer and self-evaluation at the end of translating the text, they were able to realize the linguistic and contextual mistakes effectively which made them translate more carefully in these regards in the following translations.

9 students emphasized that the project-based approach developed their proofreading skills and 5 of them mentioned that it was the first time they experienced proofreading. On this subject, one comment was:

"Through translation projects, I realized that I had not known anything about proofreading and I became aware of the importance of proofreading in creating an accurate translation by giving priority not only to meaning but also to grammar, spelling, punctuations, and syntax."

The development of the research skills is another contribution of the translation projects conducted in the class. Eight students shared the view that they learned how to search for the required terminologies and how to increase their background knowledge before translating the text in a very limited time.

Another skill targeted by the project-based approach was the development of grammar skills which was emphasized by 7 students in the unstructured evaluation forms. One of these comments reads as follows:

"While checking the grammar of our own translations and looking for the grammatical errors of other groups, I developed my grammar skills both in Turkish and English."

On the other hand, there were two negative comments on this approach, one of which was the limited role of the instructor. Although decreasing the dominance of the instructor is one of the aims to be achieved in this project-based approach, this cannot be regarded as a negative aspect for the students. Some students may have approached the model tentatively because they were not used to the project-based learning method. To get over the prejudice of the students, they can be introduced to constructive learning methods and their benefits on translation pedagogy.

Another negative comment was the limited time allocated for completing the translation work. Two students shared the view that three hours were not enough for doing their own translation and controlling the other group's translation. However, there were no groups that exceeded the time limit. This disadvantage may be overcome by extending the sessions' time limit from 3 hours to 4 hours. However, it is believed that setting time limitations will be beneficial for students to get accustomed to involving in translation projects in a limited time, as there is always a deadline for translation projects in real-life.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the project-based learning model was applied to undergraduate translation students. It was aimed to reveal the views of the students regarding the project-based training applied in a technical translation course. The results obtained from the questionnaire and unstructured evaluation form completed by the students showed that the learners believed that this particular constructivist approach adopted in translator training contributed to their translation knowledge and skills. The comments of the students, as demonstrated in the unstructured evaluation form, indicate that the students' metacognitive abilities also improved. Accordingly, the conclusions drawn from the study can be summarized as follows.

First and foremost, the majority of the students, who participated in project-based learning, commented to have benefitted from this constructivist approach and highlighted its contribution to the improvement of their translation skills. Their responses to the research instruments revealed that the metacognitive knowledge of the students also improved. To specify, in terms of declarative knowledge, the students gained a fair subject knowledge from the translation tasks provided during the training in

a technical textbook genre as well as the related technical terminology. As regards the contextual knowledge, the students learned to take into consideration both source and target audience, cultural norms, specific text genre and peculiarities of the given text type. On the procedural knowledge, the contribution of project-based learning can be exemplified with the increased awareness of the students towards the pre-translation process and employing their inert skills in the actual translation process.

What distinguishes project-based learning from the conventional method is the involvement of the students in real-life experiences which help them put their knowledge into practice intuitively. By involving in a team-work, they gain real-life experience of working on a translation project and raise awareness towards the importance of being in tandem with team members such as terminologists, project managers, proofreaders, editors as well as the client by improving interpersonal communication skills, as it was also put forward by the participants of the present study. Such a real-life experience paves the way for the improvement of metacognitive skills, mainly planning, monitoring and evaluating. In a professional translation environment, for example, before the translation, the translators are required to research the subject, terminology and determine the problematic parts of the given task, develop text-bound strategies to overcome possible challenges and resort to viable resources. In this respect, the development of research skills, increased awareness towards genre analysis and overall pre-translation process are pointed out as the main contributions of project-based learning by the students. Another significant contribution of this method to the metacognitive skills of the students is found to be evaluating skills. The peer-assessment of the translated texts by the proofreaders and editors in the classroom has a positive effect on self-assessment. This effect was also emphasized by the students as they believed that by having the chance to do self and peer-evaluation, they developed their proofreading and grammatical skills through this approach.

In conclusion, from the viewpoint of the translation students, the project-based approach has an improving effect on translation skills. Incorporation of real-life experiences in translation courses is found to be essential to train competent translators who are in full awareness of their cognitive abilities, as a prerequisite of translation business. In this sense, the necessity of involving project-based learning methods into translation programs should be a matter of concern for translation instructors, curriculum designers, and translation pedagogy researchers.

In the literature of translation pedagogy, the efficacy of constructivist training methods such as collaborative learning, project-based learning, situated learning has been elaborated in detail. This study, on the other hand, is confined to the views of the students regarding the contribution of the project-based approach to the development of their own knowledge and skills. It is suggested that further studies can dwell upon applying the same approach with larger populations in different translation courses in various fields.

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