

Multilingual Translation Workshop

Developing professionals in a simulated translation market

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Abstract

The development of professional identity and expertise are key objectives in translator education. The management and flexible application of translation technology has become a central element of professional qualification. Furthermore, many translators graduating from university programmes will work as entrepreneurs, where success requires abilities and competences not covered by traditional pedagogical solutions. The University of Turku Multilingual Translation Workshop (MTW) is an example of how translator and entrepreneurial competences can be integrated in translator education. It is based on working life simulation where students work in specialized roles in a team and as part of a learning organization. The MTW involves the integration of previously learned skills in practical situations, rapid uptake of new knowledge and skills, and sharing these with others. Student self-evaluations show that, with this integrative pedagogical approach, translator and entrepreneurial competences can improve significantly over a short period of time. The flexibility of the MTW concept offers various possibilities for development and innovation.

Keywords: translator education, employability, competences, translation company simulation

1 Bridging the competence gap through working life simulation

Professionally-oriented project-based translator education is gaining ground in European translator education institutions. Industrialization, globalization and technologization of translation present new demands for the translation profession, manifested in such industrial standards for translation services as the European Standard EN 15038:2006 (Translation services – Service requirements) and its successor the ISO 17100:2015 (Translation services – Requirements for translation services). These standards call for a new set of translator qualifications: the solitary scribe gives way to a well-connected transcreationist, the artisan to a translation business professional.

In response, a number of educational initiatives involving educational institutions, industry associations and professional associations as partners have been set up. The POSI project (see, e.g., Mackenzie 2000), the OPTIMALE project and the European Master's in Translation (EMT) have described new competence needs, defined competence profiles and sought for ways to teach these competences. As a result, a clearer

idea of the nature of the "competence gap" has emerged, as well as a plan how to bridge it. A pivotal part of this plan, as expressed in the OPTIMALE project, is to "make extensive use of student centered methodologies, such as project-based collaborative learning promoting participation, team-work, autonomous learning and interaction with other students and staff members, enabling students to act autonomously and critically in a range of professional environments" (OPTIMALE Declaration 2013).

In OPTIMALE, four issues were identified

as specifically relevant to professionally-oriented practices in translator training programmes. These are:

1. Specific modules which focus on professionally oriented practices
2. Translation 'companies' run by students
3. Work placements/internships
4. Contributions by professional translators. (Schäffner *et al.* 2012.)

In the present paper, we would like to contribute to this pedagogical reorientation by presenting and discussing our concept for a new kind of translation course, named the Multilingual Translation Workshop (MTW). In addition, we will assess the development of the students' competences in this type of pedagogical context. We will define a set of professional competences relevant in the MTW context and apply a student self-assessment survey tool aligned with this competence definition.

The MTW is a compulsory course in our two-year MA level Translation Studies Programme at the University of Turku. In this 20-ECTS course, students set up fictional translation companies in a semi-open and semi-structured learning environment, and take care of translation projects mostly assigned by teachers acting as clients and, to a limited extent, by real clients. The MTW brings together four different stakeholders, the academia, the profession, the industry, and the students, as well in their "real-life" roles as in a translation market simulation. In doing so, it creates an experimental arena where diverse notions and practices are both passed on and questioned.

First, in section 2, we describe the structure and progression of the MTW, followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework behind the pedagogy, in section 3. Next, in section 4, we illustrate the potential of the MTW through a student skills self-assessment survey. To conclude, in section 5, we discuss some salient and potentially problematic issues in professionally-oriented translator education, notably the challenge of balancing the interests of different stakeholders.

2 The University of Turku Multilingual Translation Workshop

In the MTW, students work in translation company teams on a simulated translation market. Alternating in different roles, they develop their professional identity and skills as leaders and managers, translators, terminologists, reviewers, proofreaders and IT support. While in traditional translator education the focus lies on the individual translator and on translation skills, the MTW targets a whole range of roles and contexts in a translation organization. Professional competences are, thus, developed in four different

contexts: 1) **the translation process of the individual translator**, 2) **the production process of a translation team**, 3) **the business process of a translation service organization**, and 4) **the generic workplace context** of dealing with tasks, people, teams, and organizations.

2.1 Course structure

The learning environment in the MTW consists of three distinct settings, the **lecture hall**, the **company premises** (in the computer class) and the **discussion classroom** (together with its virtual extension, a learning diary in the LMS Moodle). Each setting lends itself best to a specific type of learning and knowledge. In the lecture hall, the approach is primarily teacher-centred, and declarative knowledge, *know that*, is at the forefront. In the translation industry setting of the computer class, the approach is student-centred, the method is learning by doing, and the focus lies on procedural knowledge, *know how*. In the discussion classroom and in the learning diaries, the method is student-centred reflection, and the prominent activity is sense-making, *know why* (Garud 1997).

A breakdown of course statistics in Table 1 provides an overview of the course. The number of hours is an estimate: while the schedule and the themes and tasks are planned and scripted beforehand, changes are made on the fly, based on the needs of the student companies and emerging opportunities, such as visiting lecturers or the availability of new tools. In the same vein as the student companies are expected to respond to (simulated) environmental changes in a strategic manner, the course management team keeps their eyes on the pedagogical goals, on presenting opportunities and on the inner dynamics of the student companies to make adjustments as needed. While tasking at times, such flexibility is a guarantee for the inner coherence of the learning environment and for the external coherence with the professional language industry that the course attempts to simulate.

Table 1: Breakdown of course statistics

Structure and duration	one academic year, two 14-week modules
Scope and hours (based on 27 hours = 1 ECTS point)	20 ECTS points (10 per module); 540 hours total; 180 contact hours (lectures, working in student companies, feedback), 360 hours self-study
Number of assignments	12 translation-related, 6 organizational
Number of students and student companies	25–30 students, 4–6 companies
Number of university teachers and their affiliation/workshop	6–10 teachers from the departments of English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Spanish + 1 coordinator
Number of visiting translation professionals	5–10

2.2 Course cycle

At the start of the course, the participants set up their own fictional translation companies, write a business plan, calculate production costs, set prices, establish a production organization and workflows, decide on production roles, set up company web presence, and pitch their company to investors or clients. The student companies are provided with information material on these topics, and teachers acting as consultants give additional guidance as needed.

Once the companies are up and running, they receive requests for translation-related services from clients. In our simulated market, the teachers act in client roles, added by an occasional real client. During its life cycle of the entire calendar year, each company communicates and negotiates with clients, signing and carrying out a total of 12 contracts. The assignments feature a wide range of translation-related work, including eight L2–L1 assignments and four L1–L2 assignments. Besides translation, some assignments involve writing summaries in L2, post-editing and localization. While some of the projects take several weeks and require a good deal of careful planning and management, some are *ad hoc* tasks with short four-hour deadlines that put the efficiency of the company workflow to test. The tasks are carried out using up-to-date translation technology and project management tools, e.g. translation memories, term bases, machine translation, translation management systems, as well as lightweight project management tools, such as Slack and Trello. To demonstrate that project management is as much a way of thinking, planning and communicating as a question of implementing specific technology, traditional office tools like spreadsheets are used in parallel for scheduling and productivity and profitability calculations.

2.3 Course progression

The first course module focuses on making the translation company operational, defining workflows and improving the translation product with the help of quality assessment frameworks. Revision in L1 is given special attention in one of the assignments. In the first module, a few industry representatives take part in the course as visiting lecturers. In the second course module, the company processes are fine-tuned, e.g. workflows are optimized and adjusted to an industry standard (currently ISO 17100:2015), and the company is audited by a panel of teachers acting as auditors. Some thought is also given to the strategic choices of the company. Next, the attention is turned towards innovation. During an Innovation Week, the companies look for new ways to produce and market their services, and brainstorm new services and products for the translation market. The module ends with a recruitment simulation exercise where the students prepare job applications and take part in job interviews with teachers and representatives of the translation industry in the interview panel. In this second module, translation industry representatives play a more active role: Besides giving visiting lectures, they participate in the simulation as student company mentors and as members of the recruitment panel.

3 Outlining the MTW pedagogy and its outcomes

The pedagogical approach in MTW is to a large extent that of “situated learning”, proposed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), and defined by Maria González-Davies and Vanessa Enríquez-Raido (2016: 1) for the purposes of translator education as “a context-dependent approach to translator and interpreter training under which learners are exposed to real-life and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom”. The MTW pedagogy aims to develop translator competences needed in professional tasks and workflows. In this section, we first describe some sources of inspiration for the MTW, and then discuss the competences at the centre of the MTW pedagogy.

3.1 Precursors of the MTW pedagogy

Pedagogical practice in translator education has slowly but steadily moved from the translation classroom towards the translator’s workplace. To our knowledge, the pioneers in workplace simulation pedagogy have been the Rennes “Tradutech”, described, e.g. by Daniel Gouadec (2004; its foundations laid in Gouadec 1979) and the Maastricht “Skills lab” (Thelen 2006). Both programmes have a long history, international networks of cooperation with other educational institutions, and close ties with the translation industry. Another influential pioneer of authentic projects within translator education is Don Kiraly (2000, 2005) in Germersheim, whose social constructivist approach focuses on empowering the professional translator.

The concepts **vocational impulse** and **academic rationalism**, introduced by John Kearns (2006, 2012) into the field of Translation Studies, can go some way in situating the above mentioned project-based pedagogical approaches. While the Rennes/Maastricht approach may be grouped under the vocational impulse, Kiraly’s Germersheim approach would seem to combine features of a vocational orientation with elements of academic rationalism. The perhaps more academic nature of Kiraly’s approach is reflected in his choice of the term **translator education** instead of **translator training** to describe the integration of translation students into the community of translation professionals, and this is our preferred choice of terminology, as well.

The roots of the MTW at the University of Turku are in the practice-oriented vocational education that started in 1966. This practice-orientation still continues through close contacts with local translation companies. Before the MTW, collaborative project-based translation (Vienne 1994), translating in structured and managed teams (Mackenzie 2004), and authentic and simulated translation work as described by Hannu Kempainen and Leena Salmi (2008) have been central elements of the programme. Similar practices are and have been present in all translator education programmes in Finland (see Kukkonen 2004; Eskelinen *et al.* 2016). The MTW can be seen as part of a progression of getting out of the classroom and into the “real world” that culminates in simulated translation companies run by students (e.g. Thelen 2006; Vandepitte 2009; Carré 2015), together with work placements that include input from the translator education institution.

The MTW combines features of both the academic rationality and the vocational impulse to educate new members into the translation profession. In this respect it connects with Kiraly's approach. However, the MTW also has a bias towards the translation industry. In this respect, it comes close to the Rennes/Maastricht approach. Importantly, the MTW is also designed to be a place for research, experiment and innovation. Thus, it is an attempt to transcend the categorizations used by Kearns and Kiraly, and to bring something new into the field of Translation Studies.

3.2 Competences in the MTW

Competences central to professional translation have been defined for instance in the ISO 17100:2015 standard, the EMT network list of competences (EMT Expert Group 2009), and the competence model developed by the PACTE group since 1997 through empirical testing (PACTE 2003, see Hurtado Albir 2015 for an overview of its development). For 'competence', we adopt here the following, pragmatic definition from the EMT network:

[T]he combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions (EMT expert group 2009: 3).

According to Thelen (2014: 228–234), different classifications of competences include more or less similar elements, such as competences in

1. Translating
2. Language / linguistic and textual competences
3. (Inter)cultural competences
4. Information seeking
5. Technological skills
6. Entrepreneurial / translation service provision competences.

Thelen (2014: 235) divides the above competences into two groups, **fundamental competences** that include the first five competences, and **professional competences** that include service provision competence, entrepreneurial competence and interpersonal / social competence. Vandepitte (2009: 122–125) lists four types of entrepreneurial competences: communication skills, management skills, analytical skills and learning potential. In the EMT list of competences (2009: 4–5), again, entrepreneurial competences are part of the translation service provision which is divided into two dimensions: the production dimension (producing a translation) and the interpersonal dimension (entrepreneurial, project management and communicating with clients).

As mentioned in section 1, the industrialization, globalization and technologization of translation present new demands for the translation profession. We see a thorough consideration of the economic realities of translators and translating organizations as part of the "economic turn" in Translation Studies suggested by Yves Gambier (2012 and 2014). He points out that in Translation Studies, "economic and financial dimen-

sions can no longer be neglected. They are relevant factors that orient, even determine, specific choices and decisions” (Gambier 2012: 22). Economic factors in the translation market include, for example, fragmentation: both the choice of translators – non-trained amateurs or highly qualified professionals – and the payments they receive are random (Gambier 2012: 22–23). In this type of market, entrepreneurial skills are essential for the graduates to survive.

As a pedagogical tool suited for the needs of the MTW, we suggest a division of competences based on the context of the professional competences presented in section 2 (Table 2):

Table 2: Professional competences grouped by the context where they are primarily needed

Context of professional competence	Term / Designation	Description
Individual translator	translation competence	ability to produce and eliminate translation alternatives (Pym 2003: 489)
Translation team	translator competence	ability to participate in various communities and the ability to use tools and technologies for translation (see Kiraly 1995: 16; 2000: 13–14): communication, team management, technological prowess
Translation company/organization	entrepreneurial competence	ability to organize, manage and lead a translation organization (in the translation market or in an in-house context of a “client” organization): market communication, strategic decisions, workflow optimization, productivity and profitability assessment and improvement (Vandepitte 2009: 122–125)
Working life in general	generic/transferable competence	”[T]ime management, communication skills, giving and receiving constructive criticism, team work, reflecting on one’s own knowledge, strengths and weaknesses” (Schäffner 2012, cf. Calvo 2011; Peverati 2013).

Table 2 presents a grouping of competences as **individual translation** competence, translator competences in the context of a production **team**, entrepreneurial competences in the context of the translation **company**, and generic or transferable competences common for **working life** in general. Translation competence is here defined, as in Pym (2003), in a minimalist sense as a problem-solving process of generation and

selection, and translator competence as the ability to use IT tools and to work in different roles as described in section 2. The translation company level, again, integrates project management, interpersonal or business communication and other entrepreneurial skills.

4 Development of translator and entrepreneurial competences in the MTW

The development of the competences described above is followed regularly in the MTW. After each assignment, the student companies receive feedback from teachers on the quality of their translations and on their interaction with the client. This collective feedback focuses on translation competences and on communication skills as part of translator competence. In addition, students are invited to reflect on their individual development in a learning journal. They evaluate what they have learned, how they have succeeded in the role assigned to them and how they have functioned as members of their team. In other words, the focus in the learning journal is on the self-evaluation of translator competences.

In spring 2016, we set out to develop a quantitative self-evaluation tool to complement the learning journal. This is in line with the suggestion made by Defeng Li *et al.* (2015) to develop quantitative methods along with qualitative methods to follow students' progression in problem-based pedagogy. The development of translator and entrepreneurial competences was followed with self-evaluation surveys. In what follows, we present the results of these surveys in order to highlight some of the promise of the MTW pedagogy.

4.1 Self-evaluation survey

The self-evaluation survey used in the MTW in spring 2016 consisted of 41 statements on different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to translator and entrepreneurial competences. These statements were operationalized from the MTW course objectives on two dimensions: knowledge ("I know how to...") and skill ("I am able to..."). The statements covered the following content areas: roles in the translation organization (14), IT tools (6), project management and organization (13), business communication (5) and entrepreneurship (3). Students were asked to react to the knowledge / skill statements on a five-point Likert scale (Do you agree with this statement? 1 = not at all – 5 = completely). They were also asked to indicate the length of their work experience in translation and to describe the nature of this work experience. Answers were collected with the web-based survey tool Webropol.

Students completed the self-evaluation survey three times during the 14 weeks of the MTW course: in the first week of the workshop at the beginning of January, in the 9th week in March and in the 14th week in April. Of the 28 students participating in the workshop in spring 2016, 25 students (89.3%) completed the questionnaire at the beginning of the course, 22 students (78.6%) in March, and 21 students (75.0%) at the

end of the course. In the following, we will compare the results of the self-evaluations done at the beginning and at the end of the workshop.

4.2 Results of self-evaluation

The comparison of the ratings given in January and in April revealed that, for all the statements, the ratings were higher at the end than at the beginning of the MTW. For 36 out of 41 statements, this improvement in self-evaluations was statistically significant (comparison of means with the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test, $z > 2.4$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that students experienced a significant improvement in their translator and entrepreneurial competences. Importantly, this improvement took place in all evaluated content areas. The averages of student self-evaluations at the beginning and at the end of the MTW for the five content areas (roles in the translation organization, project management and organization, entrepreneurship, IT tools and business communication) are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Self-evaluations for the five content areas (1 = I do not agree at all, 5 = I agree completely)

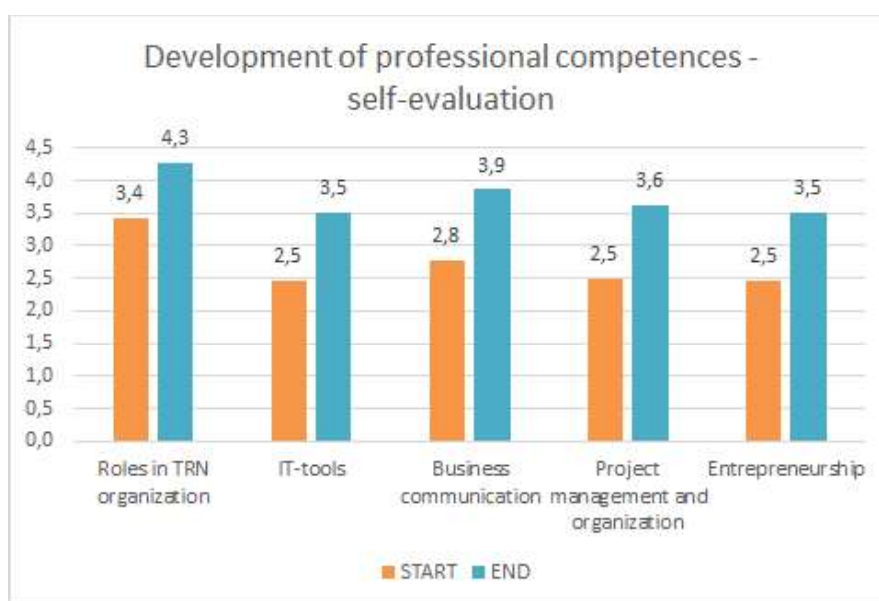


Figure 1 shows that the averages of self-evaluations in each content area improved by 0.9–1.1. The improvement was most marked for project management and organization and for business communication, but also the ratings for entrepreneurship skills (like readiness for starting a translation business) and for using different IT-tools improved considerably. Self-evaluations for the statements on the roles in the translation organization were relatively high already at the beginning of the MTW. This is because these roles are tied with the different phases of the translation process (information seeking, terminological work, translation, revision) which are covered in the more traditional

translation courses preceding the MTW. Nonetheless, there was significant improvement even in the ratings of these skills.

The statements for which the ratings improved the most ($z > 4.0$, $p < 0.001$) referred to translator competences, i.e., project management, IT-tools, and business communication. They are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Top 5 statements (1 = I do not agree at all, 5 = I agree completely):

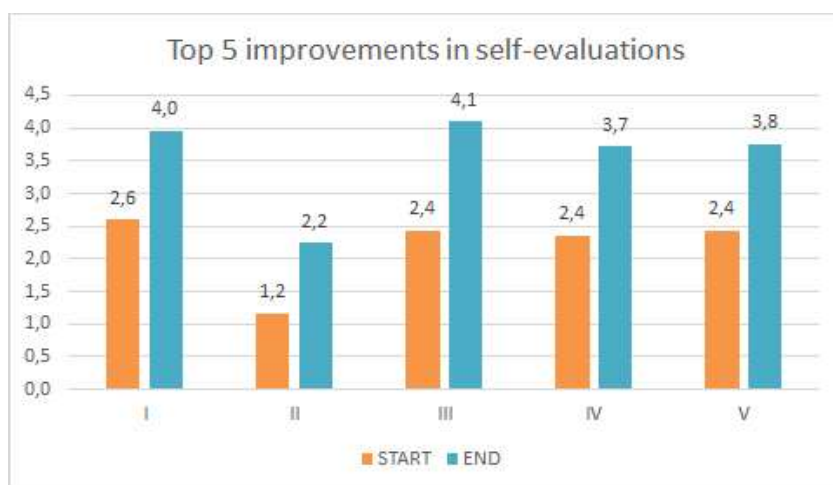
I: I know what translation project management involves.

II: I can use project management tools like the XTRF.

III: I am able to manage invoicing and payments for translation assignments.

IV: I could take care of marketing the services of a translation organization.

V: I am aware of what kind of IT solutions are needed in a translation organization.



We can see from Figure 2 that, for all except one statement, the student evaluations of each statement had gone up from “2/3 – Partly” to “4 – Mostly”. At the end of the MTW, the students had better knowledge about translation project management and IT-solutions used in the translation workflow. Also, they felt that they were able to handle the marketing and invoicing of translation services. Self-evaluations for the ability to use PM tools, in turn, were very low at the beginning of the MTW, and although they improved during the course, they were still below 3 at the end of the course. This finding may be explained by the fact that none of the students had used PM tools prior the course, and that using a PM tool was not compulsory during the MTW.

There were five statements for which the improvement in self-evaluations was not significant. Three of these statements (“I could work as a translator”, “I know where to find answers for linguistic problems in L1”, “I know where to find answers for linguistic problems in L2”) had high initial ratings (>4), since they involve competences that are covered in courses preceding the MTW. The average initial rating for the willingness to adopt new IT-tools was delightfully high (3.8), and the end-rating was only slightly higher (3.9). The statement with the lowest end-rating (3) and with a non-significant improvement referred to accounting that was recommended but not required from the student companies.

To evaluate the possible impact of previous work experience on self-evaluations, we analyzed the correlations between the length of work experience and the ratings given to the 41 statements. For three statements, this correlation was significant ($p < 0.05$): “I know what starting a translation organization requires”, “I could start my own translation organization” and “I could be in charge of information mining for a translation assignment”. This result shows that, at the start of the MTW, the knowledge required and the willingness to start a translation business depended on previous work experience. Importantly, however, at the end of the MTW there were no significant correlations between the ratings and prior work experience. This shows that the development of translator and entrepreneurial competences observed in the self-evaluations did not result from work experience outside the MTW.

5 Empowering students, balancing interests

We view translator education as an active agent in the construction of the translation profession and thus, albeit indirectly, in the formation of market relations. In simulating working life it is, then, not trivial how we do it. Key decisions in building the simulation include the choice of specific contexts, aspects of working life, and the degree of realism regarding current pricing mechanisms and levels.

Not all translation work is done in translation companies, let alone by in-house translators. Choosing to simulate the company setting and an in-house production model in our MTW is, nonetheless, warranted for a number of reasons. First of all, entrepreneurial and project management skills are at the heart of most translation work today, and apt to assert the translator’s agency in whatever position. Secondly, a master-level education may be expected to offer students a wide range of options on the job market. Besides translation work, graduates should be able to pursue employment in a variety of translation- and communication-related fields and tasks on various levels, including leadership positions.

While educational institutions have a role in constructing working life praxis, there are certainly other, more powerful forces at play. Here, the question to what extent the MTW simulation should mirror current market realities becomes relevant. As it is, while the volumes of translation industry have been growing throughout economic crises, the market has for the past decades been characterized by fierce competition, creating pressure toward cuts in translation fees. In addition, as an answer to higher volumes, industrial workflows have been introduced. The importance of efficient workflows and quality assessment seems to be readily acknowledged by the MTW students. It is the question of pricing that has proven to be more problematic to both students and teachers alike. The discrepancy between sustainable remuneration of translation work in a country like Finland on the one hand, and the average level of current fees on the other, challenges the students in their attempt to gauge realistic prices for their translations. Teachers are faced with a pedagogical problem: should the student company pricing decisions be evaluated based on current realities, or some idealistic notion of “fair pricing”?

We try to tackle this dilemma by, first of all, having students find out about factors relevant to sustainable pricing in a micro entrepreneurial setting. In addition, students should become aware of the many layers on the translation market and, as trained translators, be encouraged to aim for the upper layers, with both higher price levels and competence requirements. In support, real-life examples are given of translation companies and freelancers who run sustainable businesses. Understanding the elements of pricing on a conceptual level hopefully goes some way towards helping graduates to find creative solutions.

The self-evaluation survey results show that the MTW students gained confidence in their competence in such areas as taking care of different roles in a translation organization, entrepreneurship, project management, and business communication. Such skills are likely to help graduates acquire project manager positions or start a profitable translation business of their own, and give them confidence when interacting with clients. While self-evaluations do not necessarily coincide with actual skills, the improvement of the students' confidence in their own competences is a valuable learning outcome as such. This is an encouraging indication of the effects of the MTW concept and its implementation at the University of Turku. The development of further tools to complement self-evaluations will be a matter of future research.

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