A collaborative approach to teaching translation: A case study of a metaphor workshop

Dr Khadidja Merakchi and Ms. Juliette Rutherford, Heriot-Watt University, Dr Sui He, Swansea University.
k.merakchi@hw.ac.uk, Juliette.Rutherford@hw.ac.uk, sui.he@swansea.ac.uk

The benefits of collaborative learning have been widely demonstrated (Johnson et al. 1981, Slavin 1996, Johnson and Johnson 2009, Gillies 2016), but they still are "a remote reality" in translation teaching settings (Zwischenberger, 2020).

Research questions
1. Is a collaborative approach effective in teaching (metaphor) translation?
2. How is collaborative learning perceived by translation students and professionals with regard to: **Learning, Engagement, Social skills, Self-esteem/Belonging**?

Study

Setting	1-day workshop
Mode	In-person workshop
Participants	20 (10 students and 10 professionals)
Languages	Chinese, English, French
Topic	Conceptual metaphors in translation

Methodology

A mixed methods approach using 3 data sets combining a quantitative and qualitative analysis	
Data set 1	Qualitative analysis of pre-workshop + in-workshop translations
Data set 2	Questionnaire - 28 questions on a 5-point Likert scale
Data set 3	Post-study focus-group interviews

In order to investigate a collaborative learning (CL) approach that could be easily adapted to existing curricula, we developed a single-day workshop on the topic of conceptual metaphor. We chose a narrow focus on a specific aspect of translation to enable effective measurement of the learning objectives.

We recruited 20 participants (9 MSc students, 1 final year undergraduate and 10 professionals) from local universities and professional translation networks in the UK, for the English<>French and English<>Chinese language combinations (languages where the researchers are competent).

Based on the most common CL themes identified in the literature review, we determined 5 domains where the potential benefits of CL could be measured: Knowledge, Learning, Engagement, Social skills and Belonging.

The workshop activities were designed as follows:

1 pre-workshop activity: individual translation (English to French/ Mandarin) of approximately 450 words.

Workshop Session 1: participants were introduced to essential theoretical concepts on metaphor theory, metaphor identification and translation strategies for metaphor, through a combination of trainer presentations and group work (2 hours).

Workshop Session 2: participants were asked to apply the knowledge acquired in Session 1 to provide two revisions of the pre-workshop translation.

Task A: an individual revision of the pre-workshop translation (30 minutes).

Task B: a collaborative translation of the same text in small language-specific groups (1 hour).

The 'Knowledge' domain was measured through objective assessment, involving a detailed comparison of each participant's pre-workshop translation, in-workshop individual revision and collaborative translation, focusing specifically on their translation of key conceptual metaphors used in the text provided. 'Learning' was defined qualitatively and subjectively, and was measured through a participant survey, along with the domains of Engagement, Social skills and Belonging.

We designed a quantitative survey using Qualtrics to measure and compare the relative benefits of individual learning activities vs. collaborative activities. We devised a list of 28 closed questions across the 4 domains, and asked participants to respond to each question using a Likert scale of 1-5.

The survey was followed up by a focus group of 6 participants, 3 students and 3 professionals, in order to provide a more detailed reflection on their experience within each of the 4 survey domains.

Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the 5 dominant Conceptual metaphors

[1] STATES ARE PEOPLE
[2] BREXIT IS DEATH
[3] STATE RELATIONSHIPS ARE MARRIAGE/ FRIENDSHIP
[4] THE EUROPEAN UNION IS A HOLY ENTITY
[5] BRITAIN IS A CLOD

Results

1. Text analysis: Although participants did make some changes to their pre-workshop translations in the individual review, for Chinese these were mostly stylistic or grammatical ones. However, some participants corrected mistranslations during the collaborative review, which supports the collaborative approach in teaching (metaphor) translation. Interestingly, an additional example was found with a close link to one of the dominant conceptual metaphors, which was introduced in an individual review and later retained in the collaborative output.

For French, while changes were made to the metaphor translation choices, they did not necessarily reflect a better ability on the part of the participants to identify and effectively translate the underlying conceptual metaphors.

Through the reflection and interaction of a collaborative activity, the group translations did show a remarkable improvement in quality and coherence of the Target Text (TT) overall, but not specifically with regard to the key conceptual metaphors identified.

EXAMPLE: BRITAIN IS A CLOD/CLODDISH

ST	Individual review		Collaborative review	
	French	Chinese	French	Chinese
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less	Minor grammatical changes	Mostly no changes; one grammatical change	Linguistic metaphor change	Syntactic and semantic changes
Britain may have been cloddish at times in its decades of membership	Minor grammatical changes	Mostly no changes; one grammatical change; one reuse of the Source Text (ST) metaphor	Introduction of a new metaphor	Grammatical changes & reuse of the ST metaphor
But Europe is the less for its being washed away	Minor grammatical changes	No changes; one explication of "its".	Reuse of the ST metaphor	Minor grammatical changes; one correction of a wrong translation.
And Britain is the less allowing itself to be so	Minor grammatical changes	Minor grammatical changes	Reuse of the ST metaphor	Minor grammatical changes; one correction of a wrong translation.

2. Questionnaire:
- ❑ Group activities were perceived more positively than individual activities by both students and professionals. The differentials for each category were: Belonging (30%), followed by Social Skills (28%), Learning (15%) and Engagement (12%)
- ❑ Engagement had the highest perceived benefit (85%), and the lowest differential
- ❑ Professionals had higher average satisfaction rates than students
- ❑ Professionals reported a higher differential between Individual Learning (IL) and Collaborative Learning (CL) activities.

3. Focus group: Both students and professionals highly valued the social interaction around the learning process, speaking of the 'affirmation' and 'validation' that they experienced through sharing their understanding with others. Professionals in particular appreciated in-person vs. online interaction and mentioned the lack of feedback they receive in a professional context. Students felt their confidence was boosted by the opportunity to fine-tune their own perceptions.

Conclusions

- ❖ **Question 1:** Although the collaborative approach did not demonstrate improvement in the learning of metaphor, it did show benefits in terms of quality enhancement of the group revised translations. Therefore a collaborative approach to teaching translation is feasible and recommended.
- ❖ **Question 2:** Datasets 2 and 3 show that the collaborative approach is perceived by both students and professionals as more beneficial in the 4 domains of Learning, Engagement, Social skills and Belonging.
- ❖ Professionals showed a more positive perception of collaborative learning compared to students. Why?

What's next?

- ❖ Further research to understand the differences in the perceived benefits of CL between professionals and students for a better adaptation of this approach to different settings (UG/PG courses, CPDs).
- ❖ Exploration of potential cultural differences in the perception of collaborative learning.
- ❖ Investigation of the applicability of these results to online settings.

References
Gillies, R.M. (2016). Cooperative Learning: Review of Research and Practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 41(3). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n3.3
Johnson, D. et al. (1981). Effects of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures on achievement: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 89, pp. 47-62.
Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 38, pp. 365-379.
Slavin, R.E. (1996). Research on cooperative learning and achievement: What we know, what we need to know. *Contemporary educational psychology*, Vol. 21(1), pp. 43-69.
Zwischenberger, C. (2020). Translaboration: Exploring collaboration in translation and translation in collaboration. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, Vol. 32(2), pp. 173-190.