

GAMIFICATION IN THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING DEGREE: A NEW METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Gamification refers to taking concepts usually associated with videogames and applying them to other types of recreational activities. In itself gamification does not equate to games. It concerns a different concept that has less to do with games than with marketing, motivation and user loyalty. The idea behind our proposal begins with the consideration that, despite the current availability of more and better teaching tools, there are times when they are not effectively reflected in students' learning outcomes and skills obtainment. To a large extent, ensuring that students are fully motivated by and committed to the materials they must study involves finding the strengths that arouse their interest in those materials. No matter what the setting, from childhood we are attracted to games, which allow us to learn and practise skills that we later use in day-to-day life.

Numerous studies show that games encourage learning, given that when fun features in the process, motivation is increased and stress lowered. It is clear that when students enjoy learning, students learn more and better. Videogames are a prominent type of game applied in the teaching environment. The use of videogames increases the degree of satisfaction, which in turn boosts learning and memorisation. Furthermore, videogames are interactive materials capable of attracting students' attention and securing the complete immersion of players in the task being performed, and at all times allowing them to decide what to do, in addition to encouraging competitiveness and collaborative work. To that we must add the fact that players obtain immediate feedback after each action during the game, allowing them to learn through trial and error, which are desirable features in a constructivist learning environment centred on the student. Finally, contrary to what may be thought, the teacher also has the possibility to play a part as occurs in traditional teaching. This is due to the fact that participants, when using video games, leave tracks that provide the teacher with clues about the progress of the activity on the course, and in a very precise manner that allows the teacher to act consequently.

Our proposal has been designed by a wide group of teaching staff –called Aula.int– drawn from various departments of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Granada, with more than a decade's experience. Our projects are focussed on boosting the cross-relationship between different materials involved in the teaching of translation, for which we have designed a didactic model known as PATT (Professional Approach to Translator Training), and also created and facilitated access to tools and resources of interest in this field. With this project we seek to add gamification to our didactic model and to the already implemented teaching tools.

Keywords: Gamification, university teaching, new technologies.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gamification refers to taking concepts usually associated with videogames and applying them to other types of recreational activities. In itself gamification does not equate to games. It concerns a different concept that has less to do with games than with marketing, motivation and user loyalty. Thus, gamification can be defined as the integration of games dynamics into a web site, service, community, content or campaign to increase user participation, by ensuring that our application is more entertaining, more motivating and, in short, that it 'hooks more' [1].

The idea behind our proposal begins with the consideration that, despite the current availability of more and better teaching tools, there are times when they are not effectively reflected in students' learning outcomes and skills obtainment. To a large extent, ensuring that students are fully motivated by and committed to the materials they must study involves finding the strengths that arouse their interest in those materials. No matter what the setting, from childhood we are attracted to games, which allow us to learn and practise skills that we later use in day-to-day life. Furthermore, the instant

gratification that is derived from the game increases our interest in participating. Aspects such as competitiveness make us be better at the game, and co-operation with other players causes us to receive a share of the reward given to the coalition. On those premises, introducing the game into the processes of teaching and learning has the potential to increase student interest in various subjects.

Numerous studies [2-3] show that games encourage learning, given that when fun features in the process, motivation is increased and stress lowered. It is clear that when students enjoy learning, students learn more and better. In addition, the fear of making mistakes is lowered in games, which favours the learning process [4]. Videogames are a prominent type of game applied in the teaching environment. The use of videogames increases the degree of satisfaction, which in turn boosts learning and memorisation. Furthermore, videogames are interactive materials capable of attracting students' attention and securing the complete immersion of players in the task being performed, and at all times allowing them to decide what to do, in addition to encouraging competitiveness and collaborative work. To that we must add the fact that players obtain immediate feedback after each action during the game, allowing them to learn through trial and error, which are desirable features in a constructivist learning environment centred on the student. Finally, contrary to what may be thought, the teacher also has the possibility to play a part as occurs in traditional teaching. This is due to the fact that participants, when using video games, leave tracks that provide the teacher with clues about the progress of the activity on the course, and in a very precise manner that allows the teacher to act consequently [4].

Our proposal has been designed by a wide group of teaching staff –called Aula.int– drawn from various departments of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Granada. Aula.Int, an initiative with almost ten years behind it, was created by a team of lecturers and researchers in the field of translation. It focusses on teaching innovation and the incorporation of TIC in teaching and learning processes. Our projects are focussed on boosting the cross-relationship between different materials involved in the teaching of translation, for which we have designed a didactic model known as PATT (Professional Approach to Translator Training), and also created and facilitated access to tools and resources of interest in this field. With this project we seek to add gamification to our didactic model and to the already implemented teaching tools. Our proposal is based on 'skills training' (unavoidable in the process of adapting teaching to the ECTS credit). This time, the methodology, fully compatible with our didactic model and with the tools already proposed and applied, pays particular attention to gamification, multiple evaluation and rewards as a method for training students in professional situations that they will most certainly have to face in their future careers.

Gamification offers numerous advantages for the student: (i) it rewards effort; (ii) it warns of and penalises lack of interest; (iii) it states the precise moment in which a student enters a 'danger' zone, in other words, is close to failure; (iv) it rewards extra work; (v) it provides a clear measure of the performance of each student; and (vi) it puts forward ways to improve the student's mark in a subject and to improve his or her learning curriculum.

In short, the advantages for the teacher are that it involves a way of encouraging work in the classroom; it makes it possible to reward those who truly deserve it, and it allows for automatic control of the situation of the students, downloading management tasks.

Further, in the proposal we make here, we introduce a concept that is not entirely new, namely b-learning [5]. Sometimes [6] it is defined either as a way of learning which combines face-to-face learning with technology, online methods with classroom methods, or as a non-face-to-face environment [7]. That is to say, it refers to an environment of 'flexible education,' of 'semi-face-to-face teaching,' of 'mixed education' and of 'mixed learning' [8-10]. It should be noted that whenever b-learning is mentioned, it is implicit that elearning is a principal method of teaching and learning combined with other face-to-face methodologies with the objective of optimising the learning process and improving the expected results [5].

1.1 Approximation and review of competences in the Translating and Interpreting degree

Adapting to Bologna has meant rewriting university curricula to meet the general guidelines established by the TUNING project and this study examines examples taken from the undergraduate programme in Translation and Interpreting at the University of Granada, Spain, which has drawn on a range of competences learners should acquire in the course of their studies [12-15]. Competences are classified in two broad groups—general (or transversal or generic) and specific—and subdivided into

personal, systemic and instrumental, and academic/discipline-based and professional, respectively. In many programmes, specific competences reflect the traditional content-based programmes they replace, allowing teachers to reformulate the same knowledge-based contents in a different manner. Similarly, an overlap exists between the instrumental and professional competences and the practical components of earlier programmes. However, the broadening of scope represented by introducing competences constitutes the major challenge in implementing change. Personal, systemic and instrumental competences are wide-reaching and go beyond anything the former programmes contemplated, involving areas of our learners' individual development that were not previously given explicit consideration.

1.2 Professional Approach to Translator Training (PATT)

The dynamic nature of translator training, set as it is against a background of exponential growth in Information and Communication Technology, is a constant source of challenge to all concerned. Training translators involves a wide range of activities based on team work and the performance of project-based learning tasks. The “translation project” is essential to the terminology of translator training in the pursuit of a workplace model to simulate. However, student assessment has traditionally been product-oriented with the translated text being considered the only evidence of successful learning. The complex nature of the process that leads to the production of a final translation is assumed to be assessed via the translation itself. Our post-Bologna curriculum is constructed around a detailed inventory of general and specific competences and assessment should cover the full range of transversal competences including the instrumental, personal and systemic competences associated with, for example, the fulfilment of learning projects or team work. It is no longer sufficient to assess the product alone even though the challenge of assessing the process is much more demanding since our attention as assessors needs to focus on far less tangible factors. Essentially, assessing the product is a lesser challenge as we are dealing with a document that can be measured against predefined and agreed descriptors or protocols; to assess a product gives rise to objective comparison that can be replicated. To assess a process involves a lower level of certainty as to the objectivity of our judgement and of our ability to replicate the object, hence the value of the criteria used will depend on how solid, shared and verifiable they are. The nature of the professional development of the translator and the essential content of the core curriculum encompass theoretical and practical knowledge that reflect the core of the discipline and, at the same time, the principle roles that each translator, individually or as a member of a team, needs to perform in daily professional life. To this end, and in line with a social-constructivist approach, our project-based learning translation project is tightly structured and embraces a wide range of competences. Clearly, this model represents a basic structure that can easily be adapted to different course modules.

2 METHODOLOGY

The essential characteristics of cooperative learning are positive interdependence, the group task, individual responsibility, and the use of interpersonal and group interaction techniques [16-19]. The work groups are teams of four or five learners.

The translation project is divided into four iterative stages: (a) documentation, (b) terminology, (c) translation, and (d) revision and editing; project management itself constitutes a fifth component (Figure 1). The choice of five as the target number of members for each team is founded on the fact that it coincides with the roles—documentalist, terminologist, translator, reviser, and project leader. Learners are made aware of the motives behind this and advised to organize themselves within each team as they see best, with the proviso that over the semester they should all take each of the different roles an equal number of times. Teamwork and the competences involved are the focus of one presentation and one reflective writing activity during the semester as well as the objective of the collaborative teamwork peer-assessment.

Initially, the PATT model was designed to coordinate the learning taking place in a series of core and elective course modules that ran across three of the four years of the undergraduate degree programme [20-47]. The modules in question were a 2nd year core course in “Applied Documentation for Translation Studies”; a 3rd year core course in “Terminology”; and 3rd year electives in “Scientific and Technical Translation (B-A) English into Spanish”. The chronological order of the discrete elements that constituted each translation project (Figure 1) involved coordination between lecturers and students in at least four of these modules.

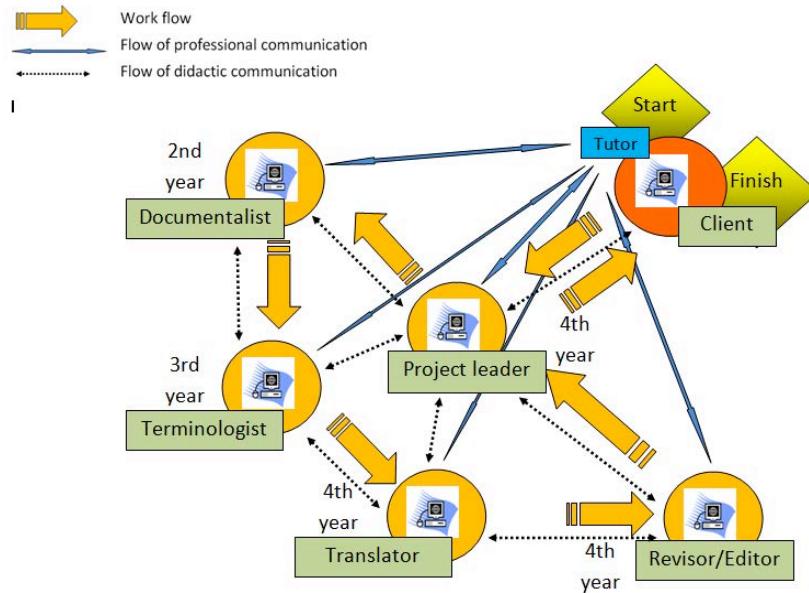


Figure 1. The original PATT design (Olvera-Lobo et al. 2007)

However, in the context of a single module these were overcome by refining the model to integrate knowledge and skills acquired on core courses within a single elective. The revision of PATT (figure 2) involved modifications to enhance the quality of the learning experience and make the assessment process more transparent. Informed by the Bologna process, these changes entailed more detailed scaffolding to incorporate a range of tasks enabling learners to further exercise higher order thinking skills. Initially the translation project began with a translation brief and ended with a target text; the revised model added self- and peer-assessment tasks requiring students to learn and consolidate their ability to apply translation quality criteria and, thus, develop their use of the higher order thinking skill of evaluating. The range of competences explicitly taught, practised and assessed incorporated visual presentation design and oral presentation skills along with an opportunity for individual reflection. Most recently, individual self- and peer-assessment of collaborative team processes has been introduced [21].

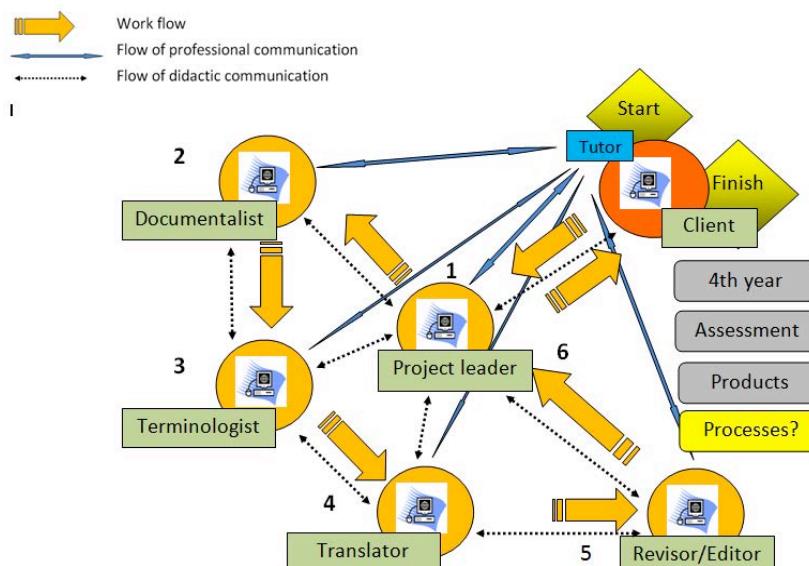


Figure 2. The extended PATT design

The extended PATT was applied in the module 'Specialised Translation English to Spanish', specifically in the part focussing on technical/scientific translation. It is a compulsory assignment in the third year of the Translation and Interpreting degree at the University of Granada. Students were

organised in six groups with the above-mentioned characteristics for them to carry out the continuous assessment tasks. There were 10 tasks in total, with each student having to undertake and present 5 translations in a group and a further 5 individually. To facilitate the students' work, on day one a lecture was given on the extended PATT characteristics, and the students were provided with a document entitled 'Work dynamic' which explained the methodology in the classroom.

In order to carry out our project, we identified and analysed the game mechanics which are best adapted to the subjects and competences connected with the Translation and Interpreting degree. Game mechanics are a series of rules concerning the creation of games which can be enjoyed, and which generate bonding and commitment among students as they provide challenges and a path to follow, whether in a game or in some type of application. While there are many game mechanics, we will focus on the most prominent or habitually applied in the gamification of activities that are not particularly recreational. A report was prepared which identified and analysed the game mechanics (challenges, opportunities, competition, co-operation, feedback, transactions, turns, points and levels, among others) that are best adapted to the subjects and competences related to the Translation and Interpreting degree.

The 10 translations involved medical and technical texts of different characteristics and specialisations. The students were not given marks for their translations but rather the methodology of videogames was followed to reward the players in order to monitor their progress. Each group had its insignia and the students were rewarded with points and successes. Although this methodology has been employed in education for many years, using the likes of prizes and certificates of merit, gamification is more than that. When using game dynamics, users are guided towards those objectives. It does not concern winners and losers. Gamification leads to a smaller number of 'losers' because users follow the path in a personalised way. Rather than all the users having to advance at the same rhythm, with gamification models the user goes at his or her own rhythm when reaching his or her own milestones and so receiving emotional rewards.

In order to organise the dynamic in class and carry out these assessments, on day one they were told given a series of materials, listed below, which were explained to them:

- Planning of the subject
- Timetable of activities
- Work dynamic
- Classification of translation errors
- Presentations checklist

3 RESULTS

The extended version of PATT has been better adapted to the characteristics of the classroom and has allowed for the implementation of gamification models in the marking process. The students who have undergone the continuous assessment (more than 90% of the total) have carried out various assessment processes of their translations and of their classmates by way of self-assessment, peer assessment and group assessment. Each correction of a task has led to proposals for different assessment models in the teaching guide for the assignment and the White Book for the Translation and Interpreting degree. In addition, each group of students has presented a translation to the entire class, and the other students have had to assess and evaluate certain parameters pursuant to a previously established checklist. All those assessments were assigned with successes and rewards from which the final marks of the students were then extracted.

The first type of assessment applied has been peer assessment. Each student had a role: client or translator. The student acting as the client was given a document with ticks and terminology that allowed for a better understanding of the job. The 'client' students had to assess the work of their classmates with regard to the successes achieved and the mistakes made, giving a weight to each of them in accordance with the initial class material. The objective was not only to detect the mistakes made by the other student, but also that by working together they could obtain an overall view of the translation process.

Once the students had learned about peer assessment, the subsequent tasks were subject to a two-fold assessment: peer translation and subsequent assessment. Thus, not only did the students have an idea of the general mistakes and successes, they also had a critical, assessed view of their own

work. Finally, all the members of each work group jointly assessed the translations of the other groups, assigning an evaluation of the most significant successes and failures and marking them in accordance with the general parameters.

All the successes achieved were noted by the appropriate lecturer and the final mark for the continuous assessment was obtained from them.

All the students gave a positive final assessment to this learning model, as did the teaching staff who noted the acquisition of certain skills and competences not assessed in the teaching guide for the assignment.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In the present article, we have attempted to contextualize the innovative process of evolution and adaptation that translator training has undergone at the University of Granada (Spain) in order to adopt a learner- and competence-centred approach that fully aligns with the post-Bologna model of tertiary education and include the gamification in the courses. The PATT model that we describe has grown increasingly sophisticated, and continuous testing and refinement of transparent assessment tools has enabled us to create a learning/teaching environment that draws on the most productive aspects social constructivism offers learners in the 2010s. Our innovations have reflected the pace of change that Information and Communication Technology has brought about in the current century, when new developments render course content input out of date between one academic year and the next, thus constantly obliging digital immigrant university teachers to retrain in order to catch up with their digital native learners.

We have described a blended e-learning course environment closely attuned to the reality of the digital native generation through rigorous integration of gamification through the evaluation and assessment. While our work clearly has limitations, due to the need for larger-scale empirical validation and its focus solely on translator training, we consider it shows great potential as a means of ensuring major enhancements in the quality of the learning experience for digital native students and that the essential approach is applicable throughout tertiary education far beyond the confines of a single discipline.

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