

BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: HOW TRANSLATION ENTERPRISES ELEVATE STUDENT SPEAKING COMPETENCY

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Abstract

Globalization and increasing workplace demands have heightened the need for strong oral communication skills in English, yet traditional language teaching methods often fail to develop students' practical speaking abilities. This study investigates how translation enterprises can enhance speaking competency among English Education students through questionnaire-based research. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected from 30 fourth- and sixth-semester English Education students at Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda (UWGM) through structured questionnaires about their participation in translation projects. The questionnaire results revealed significant findings: 66.66 percent of respondents acknowledged improved theory-practice integration, 60% reported decreased speaking anxiety, and 50 percent demonstrated enhanced communication abilities through their translation project experiences. Particularly noteworthy were the improvements shown by sixth-semester students nearing graduation. The study concludes that incorporating translation projects into language curricula effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and professional communication requirements. By utilizing questionnaire data, this research provides insights into students' self-perceived competency development. The findings support creating structured partnerships between language programs and translation enterprises as an effective pedagogical strategy for developing workplace-ready speaking skills in tertiary education.

1. Introduction

Globalization and digitisation have significantly transformed higher education and increased the mobility of international students over the past decade. These trends have been reinforced by factors such as the quality of education, visa policies, academic reputation, and economic opportunities (Gutema et al., 2024). Languages ability, especially oral languages ability has become a decisive factor for academic and carrer success in this era (Sukmojati & Rahmat, 2024). However, languages barriers still pose a significant challenge for more than 65% of international students studying in higher education institutions, affecting their academic performance, social integration, and participation in educational activities (Bianchi & Martini, 2023).

According to recent studies, Hidayati dan Sofyan (2018) stated that traditional approaches to teaching languages skills separately are still widely used in higher education, even in the face of reform calls. The advantages of integrated approaches are increasingly becoming more widely acknowledged, despite the fact that 80% of teachers still only teach english languages proficiency. In Indonesia language teaching, there is a shift towards innovative teaching methods that integrate the four languages skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to address the limitations of traditional theory-centered approaches (Samiha et al., 2023). A longitudinal study by Chi (2024) revealed that 89% of college students who do not major in English report having severe speaking anxiety when they are in English classes.

The state of the art in languages learning shows a paradigm shift toward integrative approaches that combine language learning with real work experience. Research by Massey (2021) review the collaborative project and discover its benefits in improving students' translation efficiency and narrowing the gap between academia and industry. The translation business offers exceptional chances to close this gap because it is a quickly expanding industry. By untegrating translation and interpretation into business language lessons, students develop specialized linguistic competencies in the field and translation skills, better preparing them for the professional reality (Aminah et al., 2019; Arbain et al., 2017; Mellinger, 2023). However, scholarly literature has not thoroughly examined the potential of translation agencies as platforms for language learning, particularly in developing oral abilities.

The identified research gap indicates a scarcity of studies examining the role of translation enterprises in improving students' speaking abilites. Arianto et al. (2021) state that it is important to highlight what has not been researched in the scientific literature to make the research appear novel. At same time, Zuheer (2023) studied different methods to improve the speaking skills of students in the English Languages and Translation program (Arbain & Nur, 2017; Arbain & Rohman, 2023).

This study's scientific originality is its investigation of a novel learning paradigm that makes use of translation businesses as an all encompassing ecosystem for language acquisition. In order to close this gap, this study explores how translation business might improve students' oral abilitiy through immersive learning experiences. The urgency of this research is heightened by industry demands for graduates. These graduates not only possess academic capabilities but also can effectively communicate in diverse cultural and professional environments (Erliana & Arbain, 2020; Gracella & Nur, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to analyzing and explaining how translation companies or projects can serve as a bridge between theory and practice to enhance student's speaking skills. The fundamental goal of this study is to close the gap between what students learn in the classroom and what employers actually need, which is a long-standing issue in the field of language teaching (Nur, 2020; Nur & Jamilah, 2022). As of right now, a lot of students are intelligent in theory yet anxious while speaking in actual professional settings. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that students can improve their speaking abilities by participating in real translation assignments rather than merely simulations. The practical advantages are obvious: colleges can provide more relevant courses, translation agencies may hire graduates who are prepared for the workforce without requiring extensive training , and above all students can obtain useful experience that they can utilize to land a career. In order to make our graduates more competitive and not unprepared for the real world of work, this research aims to address actual demands in the area rather than merely pursuing academic goals.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive quantitative design. The quantitative methodology was chosen because this research aims to measure and describe phenomena objectively using numerical data. Quantitative methods allow researchers to collect and analyze data statistically to identify patterns, trends, and relationships among variables. The descriptive design is used to systematically describe the characteristics of phenomena occurring among English Department students at Widya Gama Mahakam University. Rather than testing hypotheses or establishing causal relationships, this research focuses on providing an accurate and detailed description of the phenomena based on quantifiable data.

2.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study is English Education students at Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. With a sample of 30 respondents from 4th- semester and 6th-semester English Education students.

2.3. Research Procedure

2.3.1. Preparation Phase

The process begins with obtaining research permissions from Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam, followed by the development and validation of research instruments. Coordination with the English Department is then carried out to support the smooth running of the study, along with identifying and contacting potential participants. Additionally, informed consent forms and research ethics documentation are prepared to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

2.3.2. Implementation Phase

Initial contact is made with participants, during which the research objectives and procedures are clearly explained. Questionnaires are then distributed to the selected participant, and their completion rates are closely monitored. Follow up observations are conducted as needed to ensure data quality. Upon completion, the questionnaires along with any supporting data are collected, followed by thorough verification and checks for data completeness.

2.3.3. Completion Phase

In the completion phase, questionnaire responses are compiled and organized, followed by coding and categorizing quantitative data. Quantitative data is then analyzed to interpret findings and identify patterns. This process culminates in writing the research report and disseminating the research results to relevant audiences.

2.4. Instrument

The main instrument in this research is a structured questionnaire that includes a section for participant demographic information and Likert-scale questions designed to measure attitudes and perceptions with 24 questions adopted by, this instrument has been use by Getenet et al. (2024) distributed using digital forms for online questionnaire delivery. The questionnaire will be developed based on literature review and validated by experts.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

The data collection for this study was conducted using a questionnaire distributed to the English department students the 6th and 4th semester of Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. The questionnaire was designed to collect information about the students' experiences and perceptions related to the research topic. The researcher can collect relevant and accurate data to answer the research questions by using the questionnaire. The collected data is analyzed to identify emerging patterns and themes.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

This study investigates how translation services can improve students' speaking proficiency using thorough quantitative data analysis methodologies. Data preparation is the first step in the methodical steps that make up the data analysis process. Descriptive statistic and inferential statistical analysis come next.

2.7. Research Limitation

The limitations of this research are as follows: it was conducted only with 4th and 6th semester students from the English Department at Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. Furthermore, the study focused solely on the impact of translation projects on speaking skills, excluding other language competencies such as writing or listening. In addition, it did not examine the role of translation tools, such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) software, in skill development, which could be explored in future research.

3. Results and Discussion

The majority of students agree that the translation project has helped them gain confidence and develop useful skills, as reflected in the data presented in Table 1 from the questionnaire results.

Table 1. Questionnaire Data

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Translation theory courses provide sufficient knowledge for practical application.	0.00%	10.00%	36.6%	33.33%	20.00%
There is a clear link between translation theory learned in class and real-world practice.	0.00%	13.33%	20.00%	43.33%	23.33%
Translation Project helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.	3.33%	10.00%	23.33%	43.3%	20.00%
Working with a translation company provides authentic learning experience.	0.00%	10.00%	33.33%	40.00%	16.67%
Translation projects offer the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts in a realistic context.	0.00%	6.67%	40.00%	36.67%	16.67%
Collaboration with professional translators enhances understanding of translation theory.	0.00%	13.33%	20.00%	36.67%	30.00%
Translation projects introduce students to real-world challenges not covered in theoretical courses.	0.00%	10.00%	30.00%	36.67%	23.33%
The translation project has increased my overall confidence in speaking.	0.00%	10.00%	40.00%	36.67%	13.33%
Working on the translation Project has improved my pronunciation accuracy.	0.00%	16.67%	46.67%	33.33%	3.33%
Translation activities have improved my fluency in speaking English.	0.00%	16.6%	33.33%	43.33%	6.67%
The translation Project has expanded my vocabulary for speaking.	0.00%	13.33%	20.00%	56.67%	10.00%
Collaboration on translation Projects has improved my communication skills.	0.00%	23.33%	26.67%	43.33%	6.67%
Translation work has improved my ability to express complex ideas orally.	0.00%	20.00%	36.67%	33.33%	10.00%
Translation projects have improved my presentation skills.	3.33%	13.3%	40.00%	30.00%	13.33%
Working with translation companies motivates me to improve my speaking skills.	0.00%	20.00%	36.67%	33.33%	10.00%
Translation activities have reduced my anxiety about speaking.	0.00%	16.67%	23.33%	46.67%	13.33%
Translation projects have improved my ability to engage in spontaneous conversation.	0.00%	20.0%	30.00%	40.00%	10.00%
Translation Project provided more authentic speaking practice than traditional classroom activities.	0.00%	16.6%	36.67%	30.00%	16.67%
Working with translation companies motivates me to improve my speaking skills.	0.00%	16.67%	26.67%	50.00%	6.67%
Translation projects create a supportive environment for speaking practice.	3.33%	23.33%	26.67%	36.67%	10.00%
I feel more confident speaking in a professional translation context than in academic setting.	6.67%	20.00%	33.33%	33.33%	6.67%
Translation Project helps me develop industry- specific speaking skill.	0.00%	26.67%	30.00%	33.33%	10.00%
Collaboration with professional translators improves my speaking competence.	0.00%	23.33%	26.67%	40.00%	10.00%
Translation projects should be more integrated into the language education curriculum.	3.33%	13.33%	23.33%	46.67%	13.33%

3.1. Theory vs Practice in Translation Learning

66.66% of the students acknowledged a direct link between the translation theory they had acquired in class and their practical experience, and 66.66% of them felt that translation projects successfully bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Question 3, which is consistent with the findings of Chi (2021) research shows recurring disconnect between theoretical understanding and real-world implementation. In order to enable teachers to apply learning theories independently. But just 53.33% of respondents said that translation theory courses offered enough information for real-world use, highlighting a sizable knowledge gap that project-based learning successfully fills. The critical mediating role of authentic translation efforts in the contextualization of academic knowledge is demonstrated by the 13.33% gap between theoretical sufficiency and the successful bridge between theory and practice.

3.2. Professional Collaboration and Mentorship

Collaboration with professional translators received positive responses (66.67%) Question 6, supported by Montgomery (2017), mentorships help individuals navigate biased environments, provides role models, expands networks, and enhances identity, motivation, and self-efficiency. Meanwhile Brunett and Taylor (2023) stated for marginalized groups in particular, mentoring is essential to both professional and personal growth. According to research, mentoring connections improve identity, motivation, and self-efficacy while assisting people in navigating work situations, expanding networks, and serving as role models. Furthermore, 56.67% of the students said that working with the industry has increased their motivation to get better at speaking (Question 12). The relevance of Communities of Practice in language learning, where students obtain valid possibilities for peripheral participation, is further demonstrated by the 50.00% of students who acquire industry-specific speaking skills. This further reflects the importance of professional collaboration.

3.2.1. Confidence and Communication Skills

The findings indicate that students' involvement in translation projects significantly enhanced their self-confidence and communication skills. A total of 50% of the respondents reported improvement in their communication abilities (Question 13), while 60.00% stated that their speaking anxiety had decreased (Question 17). This suggests that project-based approaches in translation contexts create a supportive learning environment where students feel more comfortable expressing themselves verbally. These findings are aligned with the study by Sukmojati and Rahmat (2024) which emphasized that a supportive, experience-based learning atmosphere significantly reduces speaking anxiety and fosters students' willingness and confidence to communicate in English. Fuertes et al. (2020) has been proven that service-based learning approaches, such as peer-led workshops, help students develop leadership, responsibility, and confidence, while simultaneously improving their oral communication skills in various languages.

3.3. Effectiveness of Translation Technology in Learning

According to recent studies of Fernández-Costales, (2021) some students think that training in translation technology is beneficial and helps them learn about computer-assisted translation technologies. This validated 33.33% of the results. According to (Question 22), 14% of respondents concur that there should be greater integration of translation projects with the curriculum.

3.4. Innovative Approaches in Languages Education

According to recent studies, students' English competence is becoming more and more crucial as the language spreads around the world (Muñoz-Basols et al., 2023). As a result, teaching and learning approaches have changed to accommodate a more thorough integration of translation initiatives.

3.5. Motivational Impact and Student Engagement

56.67% of student reported that improved their speaking abilities as a result of working with translation agencies, proving the powerful motivating influence of genuine professional dedication. Similarly, on (Kieu Oanh & Thuy Van, n.d.) stated professional dedication and authentic materials greatly improve students' motivation and linguistic proficiency in translation and interpretation. In translation classes, authentic documents boost students' drive to finish assignments and advance their translation abilities. The commonly mentioned problem of student motivation in academic

language learning environments appears to be addressed by this external validation and real-world applicability, which appear to increase intrinsic drive for skill development. The creation of supportive environments for speaking practice was recognized by 46.67% of students, while 40.00% felt more confident speaking in professional translation contexts than in academic settings. Supported by the research of (Fabretto, 2019) suggest that authentic professional contexts can provide valuable opportunities developing oral communication skills, particularly for students who struggle with traditional academic speaking requirements. Engineering co-op placements offer challenges and opportunities for international students to improve their professional communication.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of translation projects in enhancing students' speaking competency, particularly in English language learning. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, these projects not only enable students to apply academic knowledge in real-world contexts but also boost their confidence, communication skills, and vocabulary mastery. Collaboration with professional translators further yields positive outcomes, including increased motivation and reduced speaking anxiety. Notably, 66.66% of respondents affirmed that translation projects effectively connect theoretical learning with practical application, while 60% reported decreased speaking anxiety. These findings underscore the value of project-based approaches in addressing the limitations of traditional teaching methods.

The practical implications of this research call for educators to integrate translation projects into curricula, encourage student participation in such initiatives, and foster industry-academia collaborations. By doing so, this study offers an innovative solution for language education while equipping students with the skills needed for professional challenges. The proposed model, which harmoniously combines theory and practice, serves as a valuable reference for developing more effective and relevant curricula in the future.

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