Assessment: Professional Development Portfolio

Contents

1. Self-Evaluation Statement

1.1. Career Goals

To centre my self-evaluation, I will begin by outlining my career goals, before discussing the relevant skills I have and that I wish to develop to best meet those goals.

Ultimately, I have two overarching career goals: to become a successful freelance translator and a published literary translator. As Landers (2001, p.6) points out, "[w]hile it's a cliché that literary translation is a labor of love, basically it *is*;" "[m]uch greater monetary compensation can be had in any of the other areas of translation". Thus becoming a freelancer is my main priority, as it will be the foundation that allows me to meet my other goals while having financial stability, independence, and the freedom of movement that many freelancers enjoy.

Although Samuelsson-Brown (2010, p.12) advises to join an industrial or commercial company first and getting a handle on the industry before aiming to be self-employed, I have previously worked in an office environment and disliked it intensely. Therefore it is my intention to begin applying to freelance agencies immediately following graduation. This contrasts my initial plan which focussed on starting with agency internships, such as Surrey Translation Bureau, or publishing-related internships such as New Books in German, although I will keep the opportunities in mind as Plan B.

Instead, as is discussed in Tess Whitty's (2020) interview with Vasiliki Prestidge and Valeria Aliperta, I plan to start as simply as possible: registering as a sole trader and having a bank account which invoices can be paid to. From there, I will begin applying to translation agencies for work. As McKay (2012, p.61) points out, the return rate when cold-contacting agencies is only around 1-2%, so to ensure a stable and steady amount of work, one should aim to apply to 3-400 agencies and eventually reach "critical mass". Therefore, I will work part-time while applying to agencies, and slowly build up a steady stream of generalist work.

Ideally within 1-2 years following graduation, I will be able to fully sustain myself by freelancing, at which point I will move my focus to two goals: to make a serious attempt at getting published as a literary translator, using my literary-focussed Extended Translation Project (ETP) as a foundation, and determine where I want to specialise and what qualifications I need to move into that specialisation.

As Samuelsson-Brown writes on marketing strategies: "If you concentrate on differentiation, then your competitive scope will be narrow but you will be able to charge a higher rate for your work" (2010, p.61). If I have a narrower field of focus and higher rates, then I can spend more time on my creative pursuits. As I only have a background in academics and languages however, I am missing the technical, legal, or business experiences that would make this immediately possible, which is why my focus is to start with generalist projects and then work my way up the business ladder by gaining requisite skills.

1.2. Skills Obtained

To assess the skills I already own, I have found it invaluable to compare myself against metrics such as the list of European Master's in Translation (EMT) competency framework (Directorate General for Translation, 2022) as well as the entrepreneurial competency

framework suggested by Muñoz-Miquel (2020), which I include as someone who plans to run their own business.

In terms of translation competence, my post-graduate course, which was designed around the EMT competences, has prepared me quite adroitly: Module 1 taught me about the industry and tested my research skills, Module 2 taught me how to use and assess CAT tools and Machine Translation, and Modules 3 and 4 prepared me to make and justify informed translation decisions in a variety of sectors. Likewise, my bachelor's degree in Germanic studies, as well as my time teaching in Germany, have all prepared me for the linguistic and intercultural requirements of mediating between two cultures, which has increasingly been the role of the translator since the 1980s (Katan, 2016, p.365). This, broadly speaking, satisfies the six interdependent areas that the EMT covers (Esfandiari, Shokrpour, Rahimi, 2019, p.3), and my steadily rising grade average offers concrete proof of improvement and growth.

Furthermore, as Kelly (2010, p.90) puts it, "graduates from translator training programmes appear almost uniquely qualified as flexible, adaptable, and highly employable citizens". This agrees with what I have observed of agency requirements of freelancers: Talking Heads (2023) for example require applicants to have a degree in translation, 2 years of experience plus a non-translation degree, or 5 years' experience, which are criteria that have been adopted from ISO 17100:2015. These requirements are the reason I applied for a Masters in Translation Studies – so that I would be a more desirable candidate to have on a freelancer roster.

Additionally, looking at the entrepreneurial competences, I have covered most of the main areas: "getting to know the labour market, being aware of one's own abilities, knowing how to take advantage of opportunities, create a demand for one's services and provide added value, being versatile and having initiative" (Muñoz-Miquel, 2020, p.31). My course has provided me with much of this, especially the final two modules: Module 5 addressed audiovisual translation, which is a current trend in the industry due to the rise in social media video content and online businesses who use such content to market to modern consumers (Tirosh, 2022a), which provides me at least one avenue to create demand. Finally, this current Professional Development Module has given me strategies for self-reflection, which will forever be useful for the continuous development of my profession.

1.3. Skills Needed

Although I broadly comply with both translation and entrepreneurial competency frameworks, I still have plenty of areas in need of improvement. While evaluating my abilities against the specific lists of competencies, I took note of weaker areas which, broadly, focus on networking, staying current, and creating (more) demand.

Networking for example – specifically, EMT24 (using social media professionally) – is for me the most daunting aspect of becoming a freelancer. I am an introvert by nature and know freelancers in other disciplines who struggle with making professional connections, which further reenforces my apprehension. I do however recognise that word-of-mouth is an incredibly powerful tool and I wish to be visible online to both clients and peers. To do this, I plan to focus on my social media presence, namely LinkedIn, as a professional-focussed social media platform.

I originally created an account in 2018 and added a variety of suggested translators and interpreters to my network to see how they conducted themselves. My curiosity dwindled however and I was soon out of touch with the app, only then revamping my profile

at the beginning of the post-graduate course as I explored different networking options, including becoming an ITI member. I remodelled my account based on some of the translators I had previously linked with and made some new connections which were more targeted with translators who posted on industry issues. Although my profile is not yet as professional as I would like, I plan to, for example, change my profile picture and become more active on the app following graduation. I am also trying to post daily to my private accounts in order to train myself to be more actively rather than passively engaged on social media and combat some of my natural shyness.

I also struggle with staying current in my targeted languages and setting time aside to read through news headlines (EMT27). To make this process more accessible for me, I have been attempting to set up a steady Google News feed, inspired by McKay's (2012, p.78) notes on the old Google Reader app which was discontinued in 2013. Google News' algorithm consistently tries to push me click-bait articles however rather than targeted global and translation news. To combat this, I regularly add relevant sites and blogs that I discover to the news feed, in hopes of eventually drowning out the noise and 'training' the algorithm to show me relevant articles.

Finally, I wish to create demand for my services by being able to translate for specific contexts – a combination of the entrepreneurial competencies and EMT8 – and make my abilities stand out so that agencies will want to funnel me work. As pointed out by Tirosh (2019), modern translation services are more content-centric than translation-centric, and a lot of clients want translators that cannot only translate their websites but format them as well as part of a web-localisation package.

As Hickey (2023) reports, 54% of LSPs list copywriting, transcreation and content creation in their list of services; additionally, 52% of companies that market themselves in four or more languages have their websites localised and 42% hire localisation services for their content marketing, such as blogs, ebooks, and white papers (Unbabel, 2023). This shows both high provision and high demand for website localisation and virtual copy translation.

Furthermore, 81% of companies have their Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) adjusted individually for some or all of their foreign markets (ibid); Unbabel also notes that 89% of their respondents plan to localise into new languages next year, with companies seeing an adequate return on their investment in current localisation efforts (ibid), meaning that online brand localisation is only going to grow.

Thus, as more and more businesses turn to being virtually existent (Tirosh, 2022a) and accessing multiple markets, it is beneficial that I learn skills and tools to respond to this demand. Therefore it is my intention to, over the next 6 months, learn HTML and, via LinkedIn learning courses, the basics of SEO and copywriting. These skills, combined with my audiovisual translation training, will make me an ideal candidate to respond to emerging trends in the translation market.

2. Reflective Report

2.1. Activities Undertaken

My reflective report is linked to my self-evaluation in that many of the activities I have already undertaken, as well as those I plan to undertake, target the skill areas that I judged required the most improvement in order to meet my career goals.

For example, one such area is networking. Besides working on my professional social media, I also attended a remote, paid event in November 2022 called "The Language Show" (https://languageshowlive.co.uk/) which took place over 3 days with various speakers giving lectures on translation, interpretation, and language teaching. Overall, I took part in 8 lectures, covering topics such as getting started as a translator, diversification of skills, video game translation and translating for the EU. I made notes on the lectures in a CPD-focussed notebook, where I have also recorded Post Graduate Skills lectures run by the University, among other, related events.

A lot of the information provided I found to be reiterated during the Professional Development Module, but it also provided useful advice from experienced language professionals, such as offering revision services when you first start and how to market your skills to specific sectors. This further helped me reflect on what skills I could target when applying to agencies, such as web-localisation, transcreation, and audiovisual translation.

Despite this, I was a little disappointed by the event because I felt there was an over-focus on language teaching rather than use, but it also offered a prime networking opportunity, and I added some of the speakers on LinkedIn who focus their posts on video-game translation (Lucile Danilov), Japanese brand-translation (Heidi Kano), or on the realities of running a translation agency (Clare Suttie). The speakers regularly share posts on language businesses and events and are prime role-models for how to expand one's presence within the field of translation.

In future, I hope that the event will increase in size and popularity and bring in more professionals to speak on language service provision. I have already bought my early-bird ticket for the show this year (November 10th-12th) for £11 and hope to make more connections with like-minded professionals, and so further develop my network.

As well as attending remote events, I have also signed up for the university-partnered business management tool called "Underpinned" which offers courses on developing and running a freelancing business, although not specific to translation. The course offers practical business advice, strategies on creating demand, and tips on marketing your services to potential clients, which is a weak – or at least untested – area for me.

During the first two months of my post-graduate studies, I completed half of the Underpinned freelancing course, pausing my progress until I had completed the Professional Development Module as I wanted to study the translation-specific strategies before expanding to look at more general business management. The tool also offers regular online meetings to discuss (or observe discussions) about freelancing, covering a wide variety of different sectors. On one of the sessions, a participant discussed their burgeoning singing career and asked how they could better market themselves for particular venues and events. The advice given to them focussed on being able to provide direct clients with targeted samples as a way of displaying one's portfolio, and to be confident and positive about one's abilities so that the client is assured that what they get is worth what they are paying, which I can certainly apply to my own business strategy.

Now that I have completed the Professional Development Module and have a clear picture of, for example, providing invoices, creating contracts, and providing reasonable rates (in relation to the German-English translation market), I feel a lot more prepared to continue the Underpinned course and to explore the management tool in more depth, as it contains project management software as well as contract and invoicing templates that I could certainly utilise in future. I would, however, have to pay for those services after graduating, but that does not preclude me from learning what I can from the tool and utilising that information then later on.

2.2. Future Development

As I am on the distance learning course, I have 6 months following this final module to work on my ETP and prepare to start as a freelancer. As mentioned in Section 1.3, in order to be able to create more demand for my services, I plan to gain skills which will serve me well when tackling web-localisation projects. This includes learning copywriting, SEO , and web-design/HTML.

In order to show concrete evidence of these skills, both to myself and to future employers, I plan to make my own website to advertise my services and portfolio. Additionally, I plan to host a translation blog on the site which I will update regularly; indeed, I am already pre-writing blog posts and collecting possible discussion topics, including Machine Translation, transcreation, and, as advised by Gouadec (2007, p.226), highlighting just how much more involved the translation process is than can be apparent on the surface to end-users and many clients. This is also something that I began thinking about more seriously after describing my studies to my non-linguist friends and watching their disbelief as I explained the difficulties of, for example, using legal terminology or the different philosophies in literary translation.

My intention, then, is to make both the site and the blog available once I have finished my ETP and am prepared to be visible to potential clients, peers, and agencies that I am applying to. One of the reasons I decided to focus on my online presence in this way is that a regularly updated blog and well-designed website are great for your visibility online and in search engines, especially when combined with more targeted SEO practices (Uniacke, 2020; McKay, 2012).

As well as being *visible* online, I also want to be *memorable*. Reading McKay's (2012) *How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator* inspired some ideas that weren't expressly described in the book – namely to focus on having a business name and logo that would stand out when being searched online and on networking sites. I could also use these on physical business cards and marketing materials to make them stand out more (ibid, p.69), in conjunction with a domain email address from my website which would appear more professional to prospective clients (ibid, p.29), both online and in-person.

In preparation for this, I have already contacted and received a quote from a freelance graphic designer that I am familiar with (see *Babit_Designs* on Instagram) for the creation of a logo, a web-banner and colour scheme for the website, as well as the physical business cards. I am envisioning the business cards as being similar to those that can be found at the freelance artist stalls at MCM Comic Con. I picked up quite a few in London in 2017 and found them particularly memorable due to their unique and creative designs. The aim of having such eye-catching materials is to make me stand out from my peers when

attending in-person events such as those run or advertised by the ITI, which I would like to get more involved with in order to further expand my network.

  In the meantime, my graphic designer friend has tasked me with brainstorming various potential logo and name ideas for my future business while learning the primary skills to help me make the website, and then liaise with them in early 2024. I understand that this will be more difficult and costly than creating a free website or blog, such as WordPress or Squarespace. However, as I am aiming to make freelance translation my only real source of income, I judged it necessary to not take half measures.

  This will also prepare me greatly for gaining direct clients in the future and I will also use the blog to broaden my LinkedIn profile and begin posting on the social media platform in tandem with the topics I choose to discuss, which will act as another form of advertising while engaging with my peers and expanding my reach and visibility online.

  In conclusion, by the time I have graduated, I hope to have the blog and website up and running to demonstrate my portfolio, display my rates, and offer concrete examples of my ability as a freelance translator, thus being the catalyst that propels me into a successful translation career.

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