



THE EFTAGOGICAL APPROACH IN TRANSLATION EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of the translation profession requires higher education institutions to prepare students not only for performing translation tasks but also for continuous professional development, autonomous decision-making, and lifelong learning. In this context, the eftagogical approach, conceptually related to heutagogy, offers a learner-centred framework that emphasizes self-determined learning, autonomy, reflection, and personal development. The aim of this study is to examine the pedagogical potential of the eftagogical approach in translation education and to identify its opportunities for developing students' independent and professional growth. The study employs theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, synthesis, and pedagogical modelling. The findings indicate that an eftagogical approach can strengthen students' responsibility for learning goals, translation decisions, self-assessment, professional reflection, and continuous competence development. The proposed framework integrates learner autonomy, self-reflection, authentic professional tasks, individual learning pathways, and self-regulated learning into translation education. The study concludes that eftagogical principles can contribute to the preparation of adaptable and professionally independent translators capable of responding to changing communicative and technological demands.

Introduction

Contemporary translation education is increasingly influenced by rapid technological development, changing professional requirements, and the growing complexity of translators' professional roles. A modern translator is expected not only to possess linguistic and translation skills but also to demonstrate adaptability, research competence, technological awareness, critical thinking, and the ability to continue learning throughout professional life.

Recent research on translator competencies confirms that adaptability and lifelong learning have become important dimensions of professional translator development¹.

These changes require a reconsideration of traditional approaches to translator education. In teacher-centred models, students may primarily depend on predetermined learning objectives, teacher explanations, prescribed materials, and externally controlled assessment. Such approaches can provide structured knowledge; however, they may not sufficiently prepare students to independently identify professional learning needs and respond to new translation challenges.

The concept of heutagogy provides an alternative perspective. Hase and Kenyon introduced heutagogy as an approach that moves beyond traditional pedagogy and andragogy by emphasizing self-determined learning, learner agency, and the development of capability rather than the acquisition of predetermined knowledge alone. The approach is particularly relevant to lifelong learning because learners are expected to determine what, how, and when they need to learn.

In the context of translation education, learner autonomy is especially important. Washbourne argues that self-directedness can support translator education by developing intentional learning, autonomy, and learner empowerment². Similarly, Zhong (2008) demonstrated the relevance of self-directed learning to translation education and emphasized the possibility of individualized learning according to students' needs, interests, and learning pace.

Based on these theoretical premises, the present study considers Eftagogy as an approach to organizing translation education in which students gradually become active subjects of their own professional and educational development.

The aim of the study is to identify the pedagogical opportunities of the eftagological approach for developing translation students' independent learning and professional growth.

Methods

The study employed theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, synthesis, generalization, and pedagogical modelling. The theoretical analysis was used to examine major principles of heutagogy, learner autonomy, self-directed learning, and translator education. Comparative analysis was applied to distinguish the characteristics of traditional teacher-directed translation education from those of an eftagological learning environment.

The study also used pedagogical modelling to develop a conceptual framework for applying eftagological principles to translation education. The framework was constructed around five interconnected dimensions:

1. Learner agency – students participate in defining their learning objectives and professional priorities.
2. Self-directed learning – students independently identify learning needs, select resources, and organize learning activities.

¹ Wider, W., et al. (2026). Prioritizing translator competencies in the era of artificial intelligence: A Delphi method study. Discover Education.

² Washbourne, K. (2014). The self-directed learner: Intentionality in translator training and education. Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice, 22(3), 373–387.

3. Authentic professional tasks – learning is connected with realistic translation problems and professional situations.

4. Reflective practice – students analyse their translation decisions, identify difficulties, and evaluate their progress.

5. Self-regulated learning – students plan, monitor, and adjust their learning strategies and professional development.

This framework is consistent with research showing that translator autonomy involves not only student choice but also responsibility for learning strategies, resources, technological tools, reflection, assessment, and the translation process itself.

An important methodological principle of the proposed approach is therefore the transition from “learning because the teacher requires it” to “learning because the learner recognizes a professional need.”

Results

The theoretical analysis indicates that the ehtagological approach can provide several significant opportunities for translation education.

First, it can strengthen learner autonomy. Students are encouraged to participate in defining their learning objectives, selecting resources, and determining strategies for solving translation problems. This changes the student’s position from a passive recipient of information to an active participant responsible for learning outcomes. Research on translator autonomy similarly emphasizes student choice, responsibility, reflection, and participation in translation-related decision-making³.

Second, the approach can promote self-directed professional learning. Translation students frequently encounter new terminology, specialized subject areas, digital tools, and unfamiliar genres. It is impossible for university education to provide complete knowledge for every future professional situation. Therefore, students need the ability to independently identify knowledge gaps and find appropriate solutions. Zhong (2008) demonstrated that self-directed learning can support individualized learning in translation courses by allowing students to learn according to their particular needs and abilities.

Third, ehtagological education can enhance reflective translation practice. Reflection enables students to examine why a particular translation decision was made, what difficulties occurred, and how an alternative solution might improve the final product. Process-oriented approaches to translator education also emphasize reflection and the development of translation competence through attention to the translation process rather than the final product alone (Massey, 2017).

Fourth, the approach can contribute to professional identity development. Translation students need to gradually develop an understanding of themselves as future professionals who are responsible for the quality of their decisions and continuous competence development. Recent research emphasizes that assessment, self-reflection, and lifelong

³ Fang, X., & Morris, P. (2021). Cultivation of student translator autonomy in UK higher education. *English Language Teaching*, 14(5), 41–57.

learning contribute to the formation of translators' professional identity and continuing competence⁴.

Fifth, ehtagological learning can support adaptability. The contemporary translation profession is influenced by artificial intelligence, machine translation, terminology management systems, computer-assisted translation tools, and rapidly changing communication environments. Consequently, the ability to learn and adapt may be as important as possessing a fixed body of knowledge. A recent Delphi study of translator competencies identified adaptability and lifelong learning among the key competence dimensions required in AI-mediated translation environments⁵.

On the basis of these findings, the proposed ehtagological model for translation education can be represented as the following developmental sequence: Professional need → Individual learning goal → Independent exploration → Authentic translation task → Reflection → Self-assessment → Strategy adjustment → Professional growth.

This sequence makes independent learning an integral component of professional translator preparation rather than an additional activity outside classroom instruction.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that the ehtagological approach has considerable potential for transforming the role of both students and teachers in translation education. In a traditional model, the teacher generally determines the learning content, activities, assessment criteria, and sequence of instruction. Within an ehtagological framework, the teacher increasingly acts as a facilitator, mentor, consultant, and provider of learning opportunities.

This does not mean that the teacher's role becomes less important. On the contrary, effective learner autonomy requires appropriate pedagogical support. Students need guidance in setting realistic goals, selecting reliable resources, evaluating translation quality, and reflecting on their learning progress. Washbourne (2014) emphasizes that self-directedness in translator education should be supported through intentional learning practices and appropriate instructional structures.

Another important characteristic is the integration of authentic professional tasks. Translation students can be given real-world or professionally simulated tasks that require them to identify information gaps, conduct independent research, make translation decisions, and justify their solutions. Such tasks transform independent learning from an abstract educational principle into a practical professional activity.

The proposed approach also extends the understanding of independent learning. It is not simply completing homework without teacher supervision. Rather, it involves the learner's ability to determine what needs to be learned, why it is needed, how it can be learned, how progress can be monitored, and how the acquired knowledge can be applied professionally.

⁴ Eskelinen, J. (2026). Assessment and lifelong learning as the building blocks of professional identity of a translator. University of Helsinki.

⁵ Wider, W., et al. (2026). Prioritizing translator competencies in the era of artificial intelligence: A Delphi method study. Discover Education.

In this sense, the ehtagological approach creates a bridge between university education and lifelong professional development. This is particularly relevant to translation because translators must continually update their linguistic, cultural, technological, and subject-specific knowledge.

However, several challenges should also be considered. Students may initially experience difficulties with increased responsibility and decision-making. Teachers may also need additional methodological preparation to design flexible learning environments and authentic assessment procedures. Therefore, the implementation of ehtagological principles should be gradual and supported by clear learning outcomes, formative feedback, reflective tasks, and appropriate assessment criteria.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the ehtagological approach has significant pedagogical potential for translation education, particularly in developing students' independent learning and professional growth.

Its main contribution lies in shifting the focus from the transmission of predetermined knowledge toward the development of learners who can identify their own professional needs, make independent decisions, reflect on their performance, and continuously improve their competences.

The proposed framework combines learner agency, self-directed learning, authentic professional tasks, reflective practice, and self-regulated learning. These components create conditions in which students gradually develop responsibility not only for completing individual translation assignments but also for their long-term professional development.

The integration of ehtagological principles into translation education can therefore contribute to the preparation of adaptable, reflective, autonomous, and professionally responsible translators. Further empirical research should investigate the effectiveness of the proposed model through experimental implementation, student performance assessment, and longitudinal analysis of professional competence development.

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