



Mapping Translation & Interpretation Courses Using Student Digital Portfolio Development

Ángel Ruiz Blanco
San José State University

Abstract

Faculty are consistently challenged by the ongoing task of establishing a chronological and coherent order to course content that students can follow without confusion while ensuring thorough coverage of learning outcomes. This article advocates for the innovative use of websites as digital tools to streamline student navigation through course material. By immersing students in fundamental translation and interpretation methodologies, these online platforms transform into dynamic workspaces, fostering practical skills essential for future professional endeavors. Website creation acts as a bridge, seamlessly integrating academic teachings on principles, techniques, and processes of translation and interpretation with practical aspects of professional readiness. Through this integration, students gain invaluable insights into market dynamics, client acquisition strategies, pricing methodologies, and ethical considerations crucial in the translation and interpretation industry. Several theoretical frameworks, including constructivism, experiential learning, social constructivism, and connectivism, support the use of website portfolio development as a teaching tool. By aligning website portfolio development with these frameworks, educators tap into the potential of digital tools to enrich student learning, increase engagement, and prepare them for the complexities of the modern world. Consequently, the utilization of websites as educational tools enhances student engagement and comprehension and promotes a strong foundation for success in the ever-evolving field of translation and interpretation. This article concludes with a sample website developed by a student to provide faculty with a framework that they can use to implement a website portfolio into their translation courses.

Keywords: digital portfolio; learning outcomes; professional development; translation & interpretation; website design

1. Introduction

In today's world, it is rare to find a field where technology has not intertwined trying to replace humans. Translation and Interpretation (T&I) is not an exception. However, despite the advances in technology, particularly within the field of AI, essential situations exist where human translation is still irreplaceable: cultural variations, emotional intelligence, contextual

understanding, interpreting, and ethical considerations (Funelas, 2024). In fact, the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections established that “Employment of interpreters and translators is projected to grow 4 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations.” Therefore, T&I courses are still able to provide a future career in the United States as it is reflected in the following table:

Table 1: States with the highest employment level in Interpreters and Translators

State	Employment (1)	Employment per thousand jobs	Location quotient (9)	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
California	7,210	0.40	1.18	\$ 33.62	\$ 69,930
Texas	5,330	0.39	1.16	\$ 29.63	\$ 61,640
New York	3,720	0.40	1.17	\$ 38.73	\$ 80,550
Florida	3,240	0.34	1.00	\$ 27.19	\$ 56,560
Virginia	2,100	0.53	1.55	\$ 40.54	\$ 84,330

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes273091.htm#st> (TNR 10pt. italics)

One of the problems in designing a syllabus for a T&I course is that there isn't much use of theory when it comes to this field so there are no textbooks that will inevitably be useful to translators in all languages and all areas (Maleska-Gegaj, 2013). This article offers some strategies for organizing the content of a Translation & Interpretation (T&I) course using a website to follow the syllabus and content of the course.

1.1 Professional and Academic Languages: T&I courses (TNR 12pt., bold)

In the past, I taught T&I courses at Whitman College (Washington State) and at the University of Arkansas. In these institutions, I used a more traditional methodology although I included a service-learning component and a final project that consisted in a digital portfolio website. Since this digital tool was made progressively by the students during the academic year, it gave me the idea of implementing the course using a website to streamline student navigation through class material. In the fall semester of 2023, I taught a T&I graduate seminar at SJSU where I piloted the idea of using the website to guide the course. Students found this method effective, practical and engaging because they were able to learn and apply the theory while developing a website that contains components needed for a professional in the T&I discipline.

According to Varo 2002, legal Spanish is considered a Professional and Academic Language because it contains these two dimensions: academic language, represented for the T&I theory taught in the classroom, and professional language, represented when students develop their website and complete their service in the community placement. The use of websites as an educational tool to organize the course allows for inclusion of both the academic and professional language aspects of the course. The website as an organizational tool accomplishes both targets, as reflected in Tab. 2.

Table 2: Professional and academic language aspects of the T&I course

	Professional Language	Academic Language
Theory of T&I discipline		X
Academic teachings on principles, techniques, and processes of T&I		X
Language competency		X
Manual translation		X
Culture awareness		X
Websites as digital tools to navigation through course	X	

	Professional Language	Academic Language
Theory of T&I discipline		X
Academic teachings on principles, techniques, and processes of T&I		X
Machine learning algorithms	X	
neural networks	X	
real-time language processing	X	
Service in the Community Placement	X	
learning as a active mental work,	X	
Learning as a passive reception of teaching		X

1.2 Content and Justification

This article justifies a preference for this practical teaching pedagogy; frame it theoretically; propose a service-learning component and a course chronology that should be followed. Lastly, it would offer an example of a website developed by a former student. The courses that follow this methodology are more practical, realistic and engaging for acquiring T&I skills and techniques for these following reasons:

1.2.1 Finding practical application to the profession

When the instructor assigns the construction of the section titled: “about me” or “about us” or “the mission statement” in the website, students will find practical application of the theory learnt about the principles in T&I learnt in the classroom. When students develop these sections can mention for instance that as a translator or interpreters, they will respect, for example, the principle of fidelity, that defends the idea that the translator or interpreter owes loyalty to the author's original text or other principles such as: the Principle of Non-Subjugation to the Text; or Appropriateness to the Target Language.

1.2.2 Finishing a course owning a basic website

Students in most cases, will not design a complete website, but they will have a website with the basic sections to start a small business. Students will become familiar using free website services such as “google sites”; “wix.com” or “squarespace.com” and obtain extra training or discounts if they sign up in certain organizations such as ATA, ProZ, TranslatorsCafe, or TranslationDirectory. In addition, they can get a free trial or free accounts using CAT tools such as Adobe pro Acrobat, google forms, etc. This link is an example of some of the services that are available to translators/interpreters: <https://www.smartcat.com/blog/top-15-websites-to-get-freelance-translation-jobs/>

1.2.3 Early access to the work market

There are a lot of students that finish their T&I studies without having the opportunity to gain experience in the field. (Abihssira Garcia, 2018). A course that follows this methodology of teaching and is implemented with a service-learning component will provide a variety of benefits. First, students will gain experience in the field without risk since they will be practicing their T&I skills in a community placement; second, students will gain experience translating their own websites while they will receive support and guidance from faculty. Third, students will receive free training and network with other students in the course that have similar interests. These connections can lead to future partnerships or potential referrals.

1.2.4 Avoid costly textbooks

If instructors follow a website as a curriculum for the course and provide students with free authentic resources (articles, hangouts, online resources, etc.), the students will be extremely engaged as well as save money on costly textbooks that could be invested in other parts of their education journey.

1.2.5 Publicity incorporated in the student's website

There are many techniques to make money from owning a website, but students will need to use these resources with moderation to avoid a negative impression on the customer's eye by running continuous ads on their pages. It is important to use ads related to their business or the T&I field in general such as credit unions, associations, software, insurances, etc. specifically for translators and interpretation professionals. Although there are many methods to raise money using the website, this article recommends the following ones to avoid a negative impression:

- Affiliate Marketing
- Pay per click (PPC)
- Selling services
- Offering freelance services
- Selling courses or webinars

Always consider your niche, audience, and goals, and choose a monetization strategy that aligns with them.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 A paradigm shift in Translation and Interpretation courses

Traditional teaching methods focused on the teacher as the only source of information in the classroom embraces the idea of a teacher-centered method involving face-to-face interaction, mainly from the teacher to the student. This conventional pedagogical approach can include other modalities; specifically, the online environment where the faculty follows a syllabus and transmits the information to the students. However, T&I pedagogy is changing through the incorporation of digital tools in teaching T&I courses and pedagogy experts will need to incorporate digital tools in the future to mold the next generation of translators and interpreters. In the field of T&I education, the dramatic transition from conventional pedagogical approaches to AI-driven teaching systems marks a turning point for academic research. In the past, translation teaching mainly relied on traditional methods that emphasized manual translation methods, language competency, and cultural awareness. Nonetheless, a paradigm shift has occurred with the introduction of sophisticated AI tools, calling into question the fundamentals of translation education. Today's faculty must navigate a complex digital environment that includes machine learning algorithms, neural networks, and real-time language processing. They are no longer limited to traditional textbooks and classroom environments (Saleem Khasawneh & Taleb Shawaqfeh, 2024). The technical pedagogy that this article proposes is in line with this new paradigm.

2.2 Course format: Service-Learning

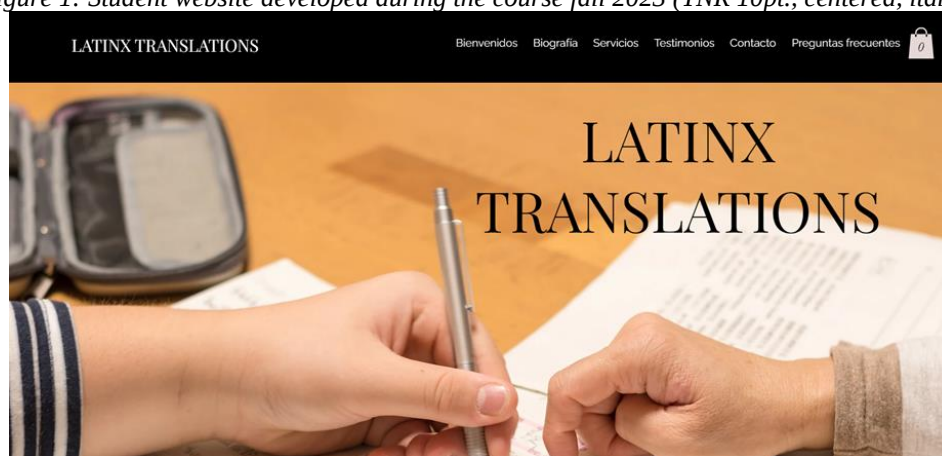
To strengthen the professional side of the course, it is important to teach using a Service-Learning format. Research findings have established that courses with a SL format in higher education have improved student learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1999, pp.54, 55, 88, 125,

164, Astin et al., 2000, pp.4–6, Conway et al., 2009, pp.240–241, Celio et al., 2011, pp.171–173, pp.174–5, p.178) and, we believe that adding the digital component for navigating the course material will further the success for students in their Community Placement. The methodology of teaching using a community placement is framed on the constructivist theory which defends the idea that “learners are active participants in their learning journey; knowledge is constructed based on experiences” (Kurt, 2021). According to the constructivist theory, when students in the Community Placement (CP) are confronted with different types of experiences, they are provoked to think and therefore create new ideas. Thereby, “learning is active mental work, not passive reception of teaching” (Woolfolk, 1993, p.485). This model was strongly grounded in learning theories by Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Gagne, and Bruner. According to the Constructivist Learning Theory, students construct knowledge rather than just passively take in information (Haddix, 2015). Apart from reducing or avoiding error during the SL project, the technique proposed in this paper has an educational purpose: to move away from traditional teaching based on abstract declarative learning, decontextualized and with little social impact. (Palape, 2022, Sepulvedad, 2022, Bizkarra, 2022 & Gamito, 2022). It is important to keep in mind that in higher education, the main purpose of SL courses is “combining service activities and academic knowledge in reflection, generating essential learning outcomes: academic enhancement, personal growth, and civic engagement” (Kawai T, 2021, p.1). In recent decades, there has been an increase in courses under the SL format within the field of higher education, along with the emergence of academic societies and journals dedicated to this area. Scientific meetings show divergences in their understanding of how to implement SL courses. In the process of learning, the important question is “what” and “how” students involved in SL courses learn (García Romero, 2019).

3. Course Chronology

After making an introduction of the course (faculty background, content, grading system, homework policy, objectives, etc.), the instructor will teach students how to start a website using free tools such as “google sites”; “squarespace.com”, “wix.com”, etc. During the course, students will need to complete at least the following sections: Home page; About me/us; Services; Testimonials; and Contact me/us, which are sufficient to start a business for T&I services. If the student completes all these sections, it is possible to add another one if needed, according to the service goals.

Figure 1: Student website developed during the course fall 2023 (TNR 10pt., centered, italics)



Source: <https://www.latinxtranslations.com/>

In the courses that I am teaching, most of the students are Spanish-heritage speakers and for this reason, I prefer they start the website in English and later translate to Spanish which is the stronger language of the majority of the students.

3.1 Main Page

After deciding on the website platform (Google Sites, World Press, Squarespace.com, wix.com, etc.), and signing up for a preferably free account, the students will start developing their website. The main page is a crucial section because it shows important information such as: the name, the mission (except that it has its own section), the logo, the slogan and the colors of the prospective business. It is also a good moment to decide the font and size of the text, along with the layout of the site. During the construction of the main page, the instructor will introduce part of the theory of the course, for example, the differences between T&I services. The students also need to find a name for the website that is related to the translation and/or interpretation service they want to offer. It is advisable that the name has a hook and is short. This name can be included in the domain or can simply be their complete name (name and last name) with com, net, us, org, etc. In this section of the website, the instructor can cover the theory related to logo, translation of titles, publicity of the translation and/or interpretation business (what should include a business card (in paper or digital), QR codes, techniques for the business to get a high position when clients look for the services provided such as “Search Engine Marketing” (SEM), “Search Engine Optimization” (SEO) or obtain money through ads in the student website. Regarding the logo, I always advise that it should be simple, small and without color or with not too many colors because it is more costly for publicity such as USB memory sticks, t-shirts, pens, etc. that bare the logo. It is ideal for the website to have a button that translates the website from English to Spanish. (Normally the clients of our students will speak English and will need translation to Spanish.

3.2 About me/us

The second section of the website is titled “About me” or “about us” if there is more than one translator or interpreter. If the translation or interpretation service is going to be provided through a small business, it is possible to call this section “about us.” In this section of the website, the translator and/or interpreter will include a bio with or without picture or a video. The bio will include the personal history of how she/he became a translator or interpreter. There are some translators and interpreters that use this section to establish their mission, but I believe this is changing with time. People are more interested in knowing the personal story of how someone became a translator or interpreter rather than to hear the more abstract characteristics of the mission statement. In this section, faculty have the opportunity to familiarize students with important concepts such as the general principles of T & I, the T & I competence, and guide the students to create a professional and competitive profile: resume, certifications, publications, memberships - ATA, ProZ, ASETRAD - , etc.(Abihssira García, 2014). In addition, in this section, students will learn the Role of Ethics in the T & I Industry.

3.3 Services

The third section of the website is titled “Services”. The content of this part of the website will depend on the students’ interests, such as whether they want to provide translation or interpretation services or both. They need to decide if they prefer to do general translation; interpretation or translation; or interpretation for specific purposes. In this section, faculty should review the theory related to the differences between T&I, and the typology of services in T&I. Students will learn how to prepare a proposal (if this is the method decided to offer for the cost of the service), T&I cost, types of payments, preparing contracts and how to find

affordable insurance adapted to the services they provide. Students will decide what system they want to use in order to charge their prospective clients (by proposal, by page, by letter, etc.) and method of payment.

3.4 Testimonials

In this section, the client will have the opportunity to post reviews on the services provided by the translator/interpreter. It is important to offer professional services and pay attention to detail for the duration of service. Providing professional proposals and contracts makes the client more comfortable and creates a professional relationship which is more likely to have a positive review. Other aspects of providing professional services such as turnover and response time, translation format and register will also be discussed. In most cases, the students do not have clients that can write a testimonial because they are starting. In these cases, the student will not include the testimonial section. If the students have provided volunteer or pro bono work, they can contact the individual or organization to write them a testimonial. Performing service learning could be another source of testimonials. This section discusses how to request testimonials, what testimonials include advice about setting up testimonials so only the website administrator can post. It is not recommended to ask for testimonials from clients that were not satisfied with the service.

3.5 Contact Information

In this section potential clients can initiate contact with the translator/interpreter to obtain more information or to contract his/her services. In this part of the website students utilize the translation rules related to the translation of contact information. Last, students will learn different social media where they can be contacted and how to create a confidential online number such as (google phone).

4. Conclusions

In an increasingly digitized educational world, the integration of websites as organizational and pedagogical tools in T&I courses represents a pivotal shift towards enhancing both student engagement and professional readiness. This paper has explored the multifaceted benefits of using websites to streamline course content, making it more accessible and coherent for students. The website portfolio approach not only facilitates navigation through course material but also immerses students in the practical applications of T&I, thereby bridging the gap between academic theory and professional practice.

Based on the theoretical frameworks of constructivism, experiential learning, social constructivism, and connectivism, the use of digital portfolios provides an interactive learning environment for students. This approach encourages students to actively construct knowledge through hands-on experience, promoting deeper understanding and retention of T&I principles. By aligning website portfolio development with these educational theories, faculty use digital tools to improve the learning experience, making it more engaging and aligned with real-world professional demands. The practical application of creating a website portfolio during the course gives students a unique opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of the T&I industry. They gain professional skills such as market dynamics, client strategies, pricing options, and ethical considerations.

The positive outcomes observed in the case study of implementing website portfolios in a T&I graduate seminar demonstrate the advantages of this approach. Students reported a clearer understanding of course material, as well as preparedness for professional challenges. The structured method presented in this paper provides a framework that faculty can adapt to

enhance the learning experience in their T&I courses. Looking ahead, there are possibilities for further research of this pedagogical strategy. Future studies could investigate the long-term impact of digital portfolio development on students' career readiness and success in the T&I field. Additionally, as technological advancements continue to shape education, using AI-driven language processing platforms could further enrich the T&I curriculum.

In conclusion, the utilization of websites as educational tools in T&I courses not only modernizes the pedagogical approach but also aligns with the broader goals of improving digital literacy and professional competence. By utilizing this digital tool, educators can provide students with a strong foundation for success in T&I, preparing them to meet the demands of the evolving T&I field.

References

- Funelas, R. (2024, January 17). Will AI replace human translators? *Tomedes*. <https://www.tomedes.com/translator-hub/will-ai-replace-human-translators>
- Hollander, E., & Saltmarsh, J. (2000). where's the learning in service-learning? Janet Eyler, Dwight E. Giles. *American Journal of Education*, 108(2), 157–161. <https://doi.org/10.1086/444240>
- Jiménez, A. F. (2018). *Introducción a la traducción: Inglés - Español*. Routledge.
- Khasawneh, M. A., & Shawaqfeh, A. T. (2024). Breaking traditional boundaries in translation pedagogy; evaluating how senior lecturers have incorporated digital tools to enhance translation teaching. *World Journal of English Language*, 14(4), 154. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n4p154>
- Kurt, S. (2021, February 21). Constructivist learning theory. *Educational Technology*. <https://educationaltechnology.net/constructivist-learning-theory/>
- Maleska-Gegaj, K. (2013, September 2). Creating a translation course syllabus. *ProZ.com*. <https://www.proz.com/translation-articles/articles/3733/1/Creating-a-Translation-Course-Syllabus>
- Rojo López, A. M., & Meseguer Cutillas, P. (2019). *La profesión del traductor o intérprete: Claves para dar el salto al mundo laboral*. Trea.
- San José State University. (2024). *About*. Institutional Learning - San José State University - Acalog ACMSTM. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://catalog.sjsu.edu/content.php?catoid=14&navoid=5068>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024, April 17). Interpreters and translators: Occupational outlook handbook. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm>
- Woolfolk, A. E. (1993). *Psychology in education*. <https://www.scribd.com/document/424123657/Psychology-in-Education-Anita-E-Woolfolk>