

# AN AFFORDANCE-BASED INTEGRATION OF SPORTS AND TRANSLATION PEDAGOGIES

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**ABSTRACT:** While translation pedagogy traditionally emphasised technical and textual competences, contemporary research increasingly highlights strategic skills (e.g., metacognition, adaptability). Although situated learning methods (roleplays, dramatisations, simulations) are well-established, the systematic integration of sports pedagogy's affordance perception, i.e., the ability to detect and act on environmental invitations for actions, remains underexplored in the translation classroom. This theoretical position study engages in an act of inter-epistemic translation, bridging sports science and translation studies by adapting 'game-based approaches' (GBAs) and 'ecological dynamics' (ED) to translation education. Emerging from research conducted with undergraduate and postgraduate translation learners at a Hong Kong university, the paper contends that principles such as performer-environment interactions and affordance perception can augment embodied, situated learning. By aligning plausibly situated learning with structured reflection, this approach fosters acclimatisation to the extra-textual, practical aspects of translation as a profession. Ultimately, the goal is enabling educators to equip learners with a holistic adaptability needed to navigate the language services industry.

**KEYWORDS:** Translation Education; Sports Pedagogy; Affordance Perception; Situated Learning; Performer-Environment

## 1. Introduction

Building on, yet diverging from, the behaviourist and cognitive traditions, social constructivism posits that learning is an active process of knowledge construction emerging within a cultural and social context, where practical experience, interaction, and collaboration are paramount (Vygotsky, 1978; Amineh and Asl, 2015). In sports education, the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model, proposed by Bunker and Thorpe in 1982, exemplifies social constructivist, learner-centred pedagogy. The model emphasises tactical awareness and decision-making in dynamic, game-like contexts over decontextualised skill drills (Kirk and MacPhail, 2002).

In translation studies, the theorisation of social constructivism was pioneered slightly later (Kiraly, 1990; Vienne, 1994; Kussmaul, 1995). Translation education was initially rooted in (comparative) literature and second language acquisition (Hurtado Albir, 2020). For instance, throughout the 1900s, many European countries taught classical languages such as Latin and Greek through the grammar translation method (Richards and Rogers, 2001), a translation drill that excluded context to focus only on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition. A shift towards communicative and functional elements began in the 1980s (Gouadec, 1981; Holz-Mänttari, 1984; Reiss and Vermeer, 1984; Nord, 1991).

Kiraly (2000) notably argued against knowledge-transmission models that sought to impart onto learners 'the correct' way of translating. His work contributed to establishing context-aware, translator-specific competence formation, evidenced by the development

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of situated (González-Davies, 2004), project-based (Kiraly, 2005; Li, Zhang and He, 2015), and competence-based approaches (PACTE, 2020; Yang and Li, 2021; European Commission, 2022). Currently, translation pedagogy emphasises active learning, skills transfer, and employability (Li, 2013; Hao and Pym, 2022; Schlager and Risku, 2023).

Sports education underwent a similar pedagogical evolution, which complemented behaviourist-inspired drill-practice with holistic, performance-based strategic training (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982; cf. Light, 2008). Equally grounded in social learning, this article bridges sports and translation pedagogies through game-based approaches (GBAs) and ecological dynamics (ED).

Before exploring these frameworks, certain terminological clarifications are needed. A critical distinction is required to avoid confusing GBAs and gamification. GBAs employ 'game situations', i.e., structured game environments reproducing game dynamics, to help learners develop tactical awareness and adaptive expertise collaboratively, in a social constructivist stance (Krath, Schürmann, and von Korflesch, 2021). Gamification, however, applies game-like rewards (e.g., points, badges) to non-game contexts, prioritising benefits for individual learners, in a more cognitive constructivist orientation (see Section 2.2). While gamification may boost short-term engagement, its efficacy in long-term performance is limited, and often risks trivialising learning (Nicholson, 2015; Almeida et al., 2023). This contrast underscores the extent to which GBAs' dynamic 'game situations', designed to foster collaborative problem-solving, tactical awareness, and adaptability (Kirk and MacPhail, 2002), offer richer potential for developing the strategic decision-making skills vital for translators, especially when combined with ED.

ED, partially rooted in Gibson's (1986) affordance framework in ecological psychology, focuses on learning through functional performer-environment interactions (Seifert and Davids, 2017). This proposal operationalises affordances as "perceived invitations for translatorial action" (Musumeci, 2025, p.10) emerging from the interaction between environmental information and the learner/translator, with their unique set of skills and experience. The communicative environment of interest here is the translation situation (t-situation), where affordances arise from information such as client requests, project specifications, or time pressures. A vague client-request may afford an experienced practitioner a clarification of functional needs, thereby adding value by unravelling the client's expectations. Learners, however, may not yet perceive such an affordance; their ability to negotiate and prioritise constraints (for instance, balancing accuracy and efficiency) is still developing. Therefore, a feasible goal for well-designed translation learning activities is helping learners hone affordance perception.

Extending functionalist (Nord, 2018) and situated learning frameworks (González-Davies, 2004), which emphasise context-awareness, this sports-inspired perspective addresses how learners perceive likely courses of action within dynamic environments. A GBAs and ED inspired approach also aligns with non-linear models of translation competence acquisition (see Section 2.3), which characterise learning as a dynamic, iterative process going from preliminary understanding to full expertise (PACTE, 2020, p.

104), as well as action-oriented language pedagogy (Piccardo and North, 2019). In addition, an ecologically and game-derived approach advances research on strategic metacognition and practical skills (Pietrzak, 2022; Dong and Chen, 2025) in translation education by foregrounding affordance perception, i.e., the ability to detect and act on environmental invitations for actions (see Section 3). Together, insights from sports pedagogy and translation studies enhance current methods by:

- Framing translating as a performative process akin to athletic performance, to facilitate experiential engagement with theoretical concepts
- Designing pedagogically controlled t-situations that elicit strategic reactions to the work environment
- Co-constructing shared realities to boost learner motivation and enrich the quality of learning (see Section 2.3).

This theoretical bridge can be further understood as an instance of interepistemic translation (Robinson, 2017, p. 200), intended as the “transmission of information between different epistemic systems” (Bennett and Neves, 2024, p. 1). Integrating sports and translation pedagogies constitutes precisely such an interepistemic endeavour, seeking novel pedagogical understanding and material applications. To operationalise this interdisciplinary synthesis, this article addresses the question: how can frameworks from sports pedagogy, specifically GBAs and ED, be translationally adapted to enhance the development of strategic, extra-textual competences in translation education?

The argument is partially informed by action research, conducted in a workplace-simulation implemented within translation theory courses at a Hong Kong university (see Section 4). Observations prompted reflection on performers’ adaptation to dynamic constraints. The article first provides the conceptual foundations of GBAs and ED. It then examines their potential for translation education before presenting practical learning activities designed to target strategic skills (see Section 5). These pedagogical examples are grounded in a specific operationalisation of translation, conceived through two complementary lenses that underpin this study. First, from a linguistic perspective, translation is defined as “the serial, agentive process of approximating linguistically expressed information from a source language into a target language to the best of one’s expertise” (Musumeci, 2025, p. 9). Second, from a professional perspective, translation is understood as a service profession demanding business acumen and adaptive problem-solving (Gouadec, 2007; Katan, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Conceptual foundations

In sports education, the limitations of decontextualised practice in preparing athletes for the dynamic unpredictability encountered in actual performance was what drove the shift from technique-focused drills towards models that prioritise adaptability in realistic contexts (Rink, 2001; Light, 2013). A parallel evolution occurred in translation pedagogy,

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed framework applies to other language service provisions (interpreting, subtitling, audio description, etc.), given shared professional demands (e.g., real-time problem solving, client interaction).

from a text-centred to a collaborative, competence-based pedagogy, aimed at bridging academic and vocational training (Kalinowski, 2002; Kearns, 2008; Mulder, 2017). The next subsections will first detail the key drivers for this pedagogical shift before exploring how GBAs and ED that can be productively adapted.

### **2.1 Collaborative and competence-based translation pedagogy: key drivers**

Alongside the broader educational shift from behaviourism to constructivism, the move towards a collaborative, competence-based pedagogy in translation studies was more directly prompted by (at least) three key drivers: functionalist theories, new policy initiatives, and advances in research on translation competence.

Functionalism laid the theoretical groundwork: Holz-Mänttari's "translational action" conceived translation as a goal-oriented process involving "actors", or "players" (initiator, client, source-text producer, translator, translation user, recipient; 1984, p. 109). This perspective inspired pedagogical roleplays, dramatisations (e.g., Robinson, 2003; Nord, 2018), and simulations (e.g., Konttinen, Holopainen, and Salmi, 2017; Buyschaert et al., 2018). The influence of functionalist principles is later evident also in their citation within industry standards (ISO, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

Policy catalysts further institutionalised these changes. The Bologna Declaration (1999), operationalised through the European Master's in Translation network, and later, China's Belt and Road Initiative (2015), promoting translation training and cross-cultural communication projects (Tian, 2024), created a demand for standardised, outcomes-based curricula and a focus on employability. Meanwhile, extensive empirical research on strategic competences, including decision-making, problem-solving, and reflective practice, provided validation (e.g., PACTE, 2020; Fernández and Zabalbeascoa, 2012; Pym and Hao, 2025).

Despite these advancements, practising strategic decision-making in the classroom under authentic, dynamic conditions remains challenging. Seeking solutions, this inquiry turned to sports pedagogy. For decades, GBAs and ED have investigated how performers (learners, athletes) learn to perceive information and practise adaptive decision-making (Kinnerk et al., 2018; Pan, Huang, and Hsu, 2023).<sup>3</sup>

### **2.2 Teaching games for understanding: A tactical model for translation pedagogy**

The Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model emerged as a response to the technique-centred paradigm in sports pedagogy. This dominant tradition, exemplified by Metzler's (2011) 'pass-command' method and rooted in Mosston and Ashworth's (2008) 'Practice Style' teaching (originating with Mosston, 1966), prioritised technical execution

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<sup>2</sup> The now retired ISO/TS 1169 (2012) cited only three academic works: Vermeer's *Skopos theory* (1996), House's *Translation quality assessment* (1997), and Nord's *Translating as a purposeful activity* (1997). Notably, the updated ISO 11669 (2024) omits these references.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Dominic Glynn (Université d'Évry Paris-Saclay), who first pointed out the potential relevance of sports science during a 2020 research meeting at City University of Hong Kong.

over tactical understanding, requiring learners to replicate ‘correct’ movements demonstrated by educators (Kinnerk et al., 2018).

TGfU introduced a tactical paradigm complementing drill practice (Richardson et al., 2023), preceding the shift from prescriptive ‘correctness’ to situated problem-solving championed by Kiraly in translation pedagogy (2000). Rather than solely isolated drills, TGfU uses ‘game situations’ (or ‘game structures’), pedagogically controlled learning environments prioritising tactical game dynamics and collaborative interaction. TGfU’s ‘game situations’ are performative spaces where learners engage with stakes inherent to the sport, in contradistinction to gamification’s reliance on extrinsic rewards (see Section 1). For example, in a modified volleyball game, a tactical stake is defending space to keep the ball from hitting the ground, mirroring the objective of the actual discipline. In a translation classroom, a project simulation might involve negotiating a deadline with a client or making a terminological choice affecting consistency in a large project.

The original ‘TGfU curriculum model’ proposed a recursive learning progression, linear in its pedagogical structure, allowing learners to revisit earlier stages and improve their ‘performance’, intended as the learners’ ‘doing’: their technical and tactical contribution to the aims of the “game situation” (Bunker and Thorpe, 1986, p.10).

Gradually, learners develop ‘game appreciation’, i.e., they internalise rules, objectives, and strategic nuances of the game. Through the lens of affordance theory, appreciating these nuances coincides with learning to perceive and assign value to constraints and affordances within the ‘game situation’. A player begins to see open space not just as empty ground, but as an affordance for scoring. Cultivating this strategic mindset mirrors the acquisition of a professional outlook on translation, which Robinson named “internal point of view” (2003, p. 170). Just as players learn to read the game, translators learn to perceive t-situations as landscapes of constraints and affordances inviting specific translatorial actions.

After ‘game appreciation’, the learning progression leads to the development of ‘tactical awareness’, the ability to read and respond to situational dynamics (Bunker and Thorpe, 1986). Learners improve ‘off-the-ball’ positioning in team sports by anticipating defensive gaps without direct ball-contact. Similarly, translators develop ‘off-the-word awareness’ of situational dynamics (Nord, 2018; Musumeci, 2025; cf. Schlager and Risku, 2023 on situated cognition), that is, sensitivity to extra-textual translatorial action (e.g., client negotiations, business positioning, project risk assessment).<sup>4</sup> Subsequent TGfU stages involve ‘making appropriate decisions’ and ‘execution’. Later modifications included ‘emerging understanding’ (preceding ‘appreciation’), then renamed ‘game concept’, leading to ‘strategic thinking’, and ‘pedagogical cues’ to nurture the learner’s acquisition of ‘game sense’, adaptive skill application (Kirk and MacPhail, 2002; Light, 2004).

The ‘Game Sense Approach’, developed by Thorpe and the Australian Sports Commission in the mid 1990s, marked a significant advancement (Light, 2013; Stoltz and

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<sup>4</sup> One can also think of a goalkeeper organising defenders before a free kick, and a medical translator pre-emptively researching institutional protocols.

Pill, 2013). It addressed TGfU's linear conception of learning by focussing on emergent behaviour and integrating 'constraint-led coaching' (Newell, 1986), in which learning is envisaged as a self-organisation process emerging from interacting 'task, environmental, and performer' pedagogical constraints. Task constraints are the specific activity's rules and goals. For example, a modified badminton game allows only long shots (Chow et al., 2013). Environmental constraints consist of the physical and social context of the performance. For instance, practising penalty kicks in football with crowd noise played through speakers to simulate the affective pressures of a match (Oldfield, Oldfield and Holmes, 2024). Performer constraints are learner(s)-specific characteristics, including current skill level, height, fitness, cognitive traits, or emotional state. Curricula are thus adapted for beginners or elite athletes.

### **2.3 Plausibilising practice: Game-based approaches and translation simulations**

Game-based approaches (GBAs) are founded on representative design, which posits that learning environments ought to replicate perceptual, cognitive, and decision-making demands of the actual performance context (Renshaw et al., 2010). This philosophy aligns with socio-constructivism in translation pedagogy, seeking to prepare learners for the dynamic translation industry (Kiraly, 2005; Calvo, 2015). Another intrinsic value of GBAs is the emphasis on trainer development. By employing tools like teaching portfolios and pre-/post-instruction interviews with peers/observers, educators engage in reflective practice, well-documented in sports coaching (Light, 2004; Forrest, 2014), and applicable to translation trainer training (Massey, Kiraly and Ehrensberger-Dow, 2019).

The interdisciplinary synergy is evident when the four signature GBA techniques (Stoltz and Pill, 2013, p. 39) are brought to bear in collaborative translation pedagogy (cf. Kelly, 2014). First, 'sampling' involves isolating critical elements, such as rehearsing a specific pass under pressure. A translation parallel is scaffolding micro-tasks (e.g., mastering the pragmatic nuances of emails in client negotiations) before assigning larger projects (Calvo, 2015). Second, 'exaggeration' amplifies specific aspects of professional practice. In translation practice, requiring documented proof of all client communication during a simulation amplifies the already stringent traceability requirements of ISO certifications, making tacit procedures explicit. Third, 'representation' is the commitment to preserving the authenticity of the performance environment. In translation, this means designing simulations with authentic workflow stages, text genres, and the collaborative or hierarchical structures of professional translation settings. Finally, 'questioning' is a (Socratic) technique by means of which coaches guide learners to discover solutions by themselves. An educator might ask a learner to infer a client's priorities and unstated needs from an email's tone or a brief's wording. Fundamentally, this technique helps learners perceive and act upon situated affordances (invitations for action), thereby developing critical reasoning and problem-solving autonomy.

GBAs techniques underscore a pedagogical paradox: cultivating authentic capabilities, requires distorting normal practice through carefully designed pedagogical

constraints. Modified aims, tools, spatial arrangements, or instructional framing add boundaries guiding learners towards solutions (Renshaw et al., 2010). Sports education research reveals how subtle differences in presenting instructions impact performance outcomes (Chow et al., 2013). Arguably, the effectiveness of controlled environments hinges on what Robinson identifies as two processes making any social performance “feel real” (Robinson, 2017, p.183). One is *icosis*, or ‘plausibilisation’, from Koine Greek *eikos*, ‘plausible’: the collective construction of believable realities (p.182). The other is *ecosis*, or ‘normative polarisation’, from Ionic Greek *oikos*, ‘household’, ‘community’: the community’s accepted distinction between right and wrong behaviour (p.182).

Through these enactive processes, cognition emerges as “worlds enacted in the mind” (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1993, p. 9), facilitating “neurocultural somatisation” (Robinson, 2017, p.185), bodily internalisation of reality. It is through this somatisation that communities then develop shared normative filters for performing and evaluating actions (cf. Bartsch, 1987; Raz, 1999). In the translation classroom, one way in which this internalisation manifests is the “normativisation as real” (Robinson, 2017, p.39) of simulations.

Educators become ‘peri-performers’, following Sedgwick’s (2003) concept of “communal interactivity enabling performativity” (Robinson, 2017, p. x) by designing plausible activities, scaffolding preparatory conditions, and guiding collective behaviour validation. Educators co-create and accompany learners’ performance. This conception of *class-icosis* offers significant potential, advancing functionalist dramatisations (see Section 2.1) and established simulations such as the translation company or bureau designs (e.g., Buyschaert et al., 2018; van Egdom et al., 2020). While such simulations have markedly improved workflow management training (Konttinen, Holopainen, and Salmi, 2017), challenges remain with addressing the “less proceduralised” aspects of practice (Toury, 2012, p. 287): handling time-induced stress and authentic unpredictability (Nord, 2005, 2018), managing emotional labour inherent in client relations and affective responses to critical feedback (cf. Risku, 2014; Lehr, 2014), or adhering to business etiquette in complex communicative situations. To address such challenges, educators have increasingly turned to experiential methods such as prolonged roleplays, simulated workflows, or involving practitioners (Gouadec, 2003; Toury, 2012), choices that help catering for educational contexts in which instructors lack industry experience (Venuti, 2017).

The efficacy of such activities can be powerfully reframed through the lens of sports pedagogy, which posits that expertise develops through the simultaneous engagement of an individual with a task-rich environment and their own perceptual-motor systems (Davids et al., 2013). This focus on embodied engagement aligns with growing research on embodied and situated cognition in translation studies (cf. Kiraly, 1995; Risku, 2014), challenging older, linear models of skill acquisition that oversimplify the non-linear, complex nature of learning (PACTE, 2020; see Section 1). In sports science, this critique of linear learning models has evolved into ED (Davids, Handford, and Williams, 1994; Davids, et al., 2013). ED advocates for “non-linear pedagogical approaches” (Kinnerk et al., 2018,

p.14) grounded in continuous learner-environment interaction. Section 3 will examine how ED provides a robust theoretical foundation to augment GBAs by specifically harnessing the learner's ability to perceive and act upon environmental affordances.

### **3. Ecological dynamics: affordances for translation education**

Ecological dynamics (ED) is a theoretical framework that integrates phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), ecological psychology (Gibson, 1986), and enactive cognition (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1993). Developed to understand how skilled performers navigate complex environments, ED is based on a key observation: expertise emerges from the functional interaction of physical and cognitive processes within a specific context. Consequently, pedagogical design focuses on creating learning environments where learners can interact with rich, task-relevant stimuli to optimise their perception of affordances and thereby foster adaptive expertise development (Davids et al., 2013).

A core principle of ED is the manipulation of environmental constraints to cultivate learners' readiness to perceive affordances, invitations for action (Gibson, 1986; Davids et al., 2013). Since their seminal definition in ecological psychology, affordances are inherently relational, arising from interaction between 'organisms' and their environment. Gibson's canonical example illustrates this: a clear and visible physical path, by its presence, shape and size, "affords pedestrian locomotion" (1986, p. 26) for a mobile creature, just as apples hanging from a tree invite picking. This concept, rooted in Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology of perception as active interpretation of the world for action, has been applied to areas such as design (Norman, 1999), robotics (Asaro, 2009), organisational studies (Leonardi, 2013), and musicology (Schiavio and Kimmel, 2021). In translation studies, Robinson (2022) builds on embodied perception to posit a philosophical reading of W. Benjamin's 'abilities' inherent in texts (translatability, reproducibility) as affordances. In this study, the focus is pedagogical operationalisation of affordances: how to design plausible environments to render specific translation-relevant actions perceptible and possible for learners.

ED frames affordance perception as a metric of expertise and a diagnostic tool for learning efficacy (Seifert and Davids, 2012, 2017). Taking the performer-environment relationship as the unit of analysis shifts emphasis from assessing internal knowledge to evaluating "functional knowledge application", i.e., how learners adapt behaviour to achieve goals in a specific context (Light, 2008, p. 24). ED operationalises expertise as "the continuous functional adaptation of behaviours to a set of interacting constraints in order to exploit them to the fullest in achieving specific intended performance goals" (Seifert and Davids, 2017, p. 3). This definition is congruent with the view that translation expertise is "adaptive as a result of its acquisition in variable and unpredictable environments" (Shreve, 2018, p. 102). It also serves as a theoretical framework for understanding the highly situated and distributed cognitive processes characterising professional translation practice (Shreve, 2020; Schlager and Risku, 2024). Translation educators can apply the ED paradigm by designing learning environments that foster "perceptual attunement" (Davis

et al., 2013, p. 25) as a key strategic competence. The ability to transform a client's vague email into an actionable 'invitation to clarify' depends directly on the translator's attunement to environmental cues.

Furthermore, ED highlights that attunement is both individual and collective. Collective attunement is achieved via "shared affordances", defined as "sources of information that can be perceived by groups of players attuned to them" (Araújo, Brito, and Carrilho, 2023, p. 26). Research in team sports shows that this focus enhances a group's ability "to adapt to the momentary characteristics of the performance environment" (Araújo, Brito, and Carrilho, 2023, p. 26). These insights apply to scenarios involving teams of translators or groups involving project managers and clients. The ED framework allows educators to target performance metrics related to strategic competence, aligning with extant competence frameworks from industry (e.g., ISO certification) or academic institutions (e.g., PETRA e-framework; ILOs).

This approach nurtures a translator's capacity for adaptive problem-solving and the ability to perceive, interpret, and act upon the affordances of each t-situation. Having now established the theoretical framework, its validity requires empirical grounding.

#### **4. Methodological clarifications**

As a theoretical paper, this study's primary contribution is the conceptual integration of sports and translation pedagogies. This synthesis, however, is empirically grounded and critically informed by a three-year action research project conducted between Fall 2020 and Spring 2023 at a university in Hong Kong. The project was implemented across two undergraduate and one postgraduate 'Theory of Translation' courses, core programme components designed to provide the discipline's conceptual foundations. Within these courses, a six-week workplace simulation served as a Discovery Enriched Curriculum term assignment, during which learners performed the roles of project managers and translators. It is crucial to note that while these simulations were grounded in situated learning and partially employed GBA techniques (at least in the later editions in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023), they did not fully implement the performance-oriented, affordance-based pedagogy proposed in this study.

Methodologically, insights were developed through an iterative process of educator reflection and learner feedback. Initial reflection on undergraduate (Year 3) performance in the 2019-2020 simulation (N=78) prompted a pilot feedback initiative with a master's cohort in Fall 2020 (N=78), which garnered qualitative responses from 14% (n=11) via a focus group and open-ended surveys. Building on these findings, a more extensive data collection was implemented with an undergraduate cohort (Year 3, N=70) in Spring 2022. This round achieved a 100% (n= 70) participation rate for close-ended surveys, while a 37% participation rate yielded rich qualitative data from two semi-structured focus groups (n=6) and written surveys (n=25), complemented by interviews with two educators responsible for the courses. A separate publication (Musumeci, 2025) provides a comprehensive analysis of this (nevertheless modest) dataset.

The insights gleaned from the data, particularly concerning engagement with complex, unpredictable professional problems, prompted a deeper conceptual investigation of sports pedagogical frameworks. Therefore, this is not a direct report of the project's findings but rather a theoretical synthesis developed as a reflective educator's response to them. It is also informed by first-hand experience as a translator and researcher across European and Asian contexts, suggesting that a more systematic integration could yield significant benefits.

The proposed integration supports learners across the two dimensions of translation defined in Section 1: the agentive, linguistic process and the adaptive, service-oriented profession. GBAs and ED offer a structured approach to enhance task and project-based situated learning. Such integration is operationalised via systematic constraint design, cultivating attunement to ease affordance perception, and assessing adaptive behaviour as a metric of expertise. As discussed in Section 2.3, these components synergise with 'plausibilisation' (Robinson, 2017), here pedagogically reframed as *class-icosis*: the collective, co-constructed belief in the simulated learning environment. Through *class-icosis*, educators sustain engagement and legitimise the learning process. Section 5 illustrates the application of this framework through examples of pedagogical practice.

## **5. Activity design: Applying GBAs and ED to translation education**

To demonstrate the proposed synthesis, this section presents two prototypical situated learning activities, each in a dedicated subsection. The first (5.1) focuses on textual and strategic problem-solving, while the second (5.2) emphasises interpersonal negotiation and business acumen in freelance settings. These activities are testable propositions for research and flexible templates for contextualised application. Each activity description employs a consistent structure for clarity: 'stage headings' are presented in bold font; 'general learning goals' are bulleted and bolded; 'pedagogical measures' appear in italics with circular bullets; 'targeted skills' are italicised and marked with star bullets.

### **5.1 GBA and official document translation practice**

#### **Stage 1: Class-icosis (plausibilisation)**

- **Establishing shared reality and conditions for embodied awareness**
- *Discuss real-world official translations settings: proceedings, immigration applications, civil registrations (marriage, citizenship), emphasising implicit expectations of maximum accuracy, clarity, and punctuality. Market entry insights (e.g., regional certifications, translator qualification requirements) can also be implemented here.*
- *Guest speaker/expert: if feasible, invite active certified translators or consular/embassy representatives to share insights and challenges, such as whether certified translators serve on a freelance or in-house basis.*
- ★ *Emergent game sense and appreciation: learners share initial thoughts and feelings on certified translations and the broader context of relevant authorities, qualifications, or professional communication skills required.*

### Stage 2: Constraint-based design

- **Functionalist translation theories, GBAs, and ED: A dramatised scenario**
  - *Role: certified translators process a birth certificate for visa applications.*
  - *Sampling; constraint: obscure acronym resolution (under time pressure).*
  - *Exaggeration: remove readily available digital solutions (search /AI 'fail').*
  - ★ *Emergent tactical awareness: learners discuss potential meanings based on available information, and how to find a solution.*

### Stage 3: Adaptive response practice

- *Pedagogical cue: give partial cues about the issuing office/department.*
- ★ *Representation: add concurrent tasks (e.g., urgent invoice request).*
- ★ *Perceptual attunement; adaptive response; making appropriate decisions: learners may choose to write an email, or call (time pressure, if activated) to enquire directly about the acronym's meaning.*
- ★ *Game sense; strategic thinking: experience how digital searches do not always solve everything; direct communication can be a strategically.*

### Stage 4: Affordance debriefing

- **Embodied reflection**
- **Guided discussion: what worked well, what challenges and feelings arose. The discussion can also be directed towards assessing emotional states.**
- **Questioning: "Beyond the cue, what environmental signals could have indicated the acronym was critical/uncritical?" (e.g., document's purpose, client's visa urgency, textual positioning, legal consequences of errors).**
- **Educator prompt: "Compare perceived and missed affordances".**
- ★ *Strategic Metacognition: "What alternatives existed beyond the cued bureau contact?" (e.g., professional networks, forums, asking the client).*

Learners can compare their initial assumptions with this experience, also reflecting on the importance of achieving clarity in professional communication. Practising assertive but polite enquiries to clients, colleagues, or authorities may also be integrated.

## 5.2 Constraint-led approach in freelancer's client email negotiation practice

### Stage 1: Class-icosis

- **Establishing shared reality and conditions for embodied awareness**
  - *Real-case (redacted) email threads analysis: showing typical client negotiations patterns and prompting learners to consider implications of client management on a freelancers' life.*
  - *Discuss income volatility (e.g., "Your rent depends on this client").*
  - *Guest translator/expert: demonstrate email protocols, time-management techniques, and, where possible, research-backed best practices.*

- ★ *Emerging understanding, game appreciation, game sense: learners gain perspective on professional communication from the internal point of view of a practitioner (see Section 2.2).*

### **Stage 2: Constraint-based design**

- **The T-situation scenario**
  - *An email reaches the freelancers/learners' inbox. 'Delivery' can be on a projector for in-class TLAs, or individual via virtual learning environments.*
  - *Sampling: extra-textual focus on the email; source text can be withheld.*
  - *Exaggeration: client requests a translation without any specification: "Your services were recommended to me by Prof. Jones. Please translate this text at your earliest convenience and give me your best price."*
  - *Questioning: "How to react to such a request?"*
- ★ *Emergent tactical awareness: learners share potential reactions.*

### **Stage 3: Adaptive response practice**

- *Pedagogical cue: "Three available courses of action will be considered. First, let us examine two".*
- *Questioning: "Can you hypothesise the third?"*
- ★ *Game appreciation, perceptual attunement, tactical awareness: two potential courses of action are shared with class:*
  - 1) *Accept immediately.*
  - 2) *Elicit specifications from the client first.*
  - 3) *Not shared ("Any guesses?").*

### **Performance options**

- *Pedagogical cue: "You might want to incorporate Nord's (2005) list of essential information to gather before starting a translation task", eliciting how theories of translation can inform practice.*
- ★ *Constraint prioritisation, affordance perception, making appropriate decisions: 1) affords speed, with a potential risk of quality/reputation loss. 2) abides by professional standards but engenders client's impatience.*
- ★ *Skill execution: with acquired tactical awareness, learners draft answers.*

### **Stage 4: Affordance debriefing**

- **Embodied reflection: learners share insights on the importance of formulating polite and concise requests to elicit information from clients, transferability of these skills to other professions, and how/if translation theory informed their practice. They can also consider how stressful this experience felt.**
- *Questioning: "How did you physically react during decision points?"(Mapping stress levels to professional consequences).*

- ★ *Strategic metacognition; perceptual attunement: “What in the email signalled this might have been high-risk?” (e.g., sender’s domain, no deadline, vague ‘best price’). “Why rejecting this job might demonstrate higher professionalism than accepting it?” (E.g., client-educator role boundary; client portfolio selectivity).*
- *Professional calibration: compare learners’ draft emails with professional ones, and ISO 11669 requirements.*
- *Elicit or share the third option: rejecting the job.*

The two activities are practical illustrations of how translation education, GBAs and ED can be integrated. The following section abstracts their core design logic and proposes a corresponding method for evaluation.

### 5.3 Synthesis and assessment

To visualise the theoretical underpinnings of each design choice and offer a template for generating further activities, Table 1 maps the conceptual alignment between the sports pedagogy principles and their instantiation in the translation activities.

**Table 1.** Sports pedagogy-inspired translation learning activities

<b>Pedagogical Component</b>	<b>Certified Translations (TLA 1)</b>	<b>Client Email Negotiation (TLA 2)</b>	<b>Conceptual Alignment</b>
<b>Representative Design</b>	Birth certificate with ambiguous legal acronym	High-stakes email with missing specifications	ED: Davids et al. (2013) perceptual-motor coordination challenges
<b>Constraint Types</b>	<i>Task:</i> ambiguous acronym; <i>Environmental:</i> time pressure; <i>Performer:</i> novice vs. advanced differentiation	<i>Task:</i> zero-specification request; <i>Environmental:</i> simulated inbox context; <i>Performer:</i> freelance role enactment	ED: Seifert and Davids, (2017) Newell’s (1986) constraint-led approach
<b>Affordance Focus</b>	Detecting document/institutional cues	Interpreting email subtext (urgency, risk)	Gibson (1986)/ED: performer-environment unit of analysis
<b>Tactical Development</b>	Institutional contact strategies	Client education protocols	TGfU: Bunker and Thorpe (1982) tactical layers
<b>Debriefing Method</b>	Embodied recall of stress responses Mapping missed/utilised affordances	Physical reaction analysis; Professional email benchmarking	ED: Guignard et al. (2017) perception-action review
<b>Class Icosis</b>	Guest speaker on consular translation realities	Redacted email threads + "rent dependency" framing	Translation studies: (Robinson, 2017) icosis and ecosis

<b>Assessment Metrics</b>	Cue detection breadth; Prioritisation speed	Professionalism in reply; Risk signal identification	Aligned with provisional rubric (Table 2)
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Moving from design to assessment and building on prior work that established the initial conceptual viability of applying sports pedagogy approaches to translation education (Musumeci, 2022, 2023), this synthesis suggests performance-oriented assessment complementing output-based evaluation. Indicators could include:

- *Attunement speed*: latent/timely strategy adjustment after client communication;
- *Perceptive breadth*: range of textual, interpersonal, environmental constraints and affordances detected;
- *Solution flexibility*: ability to generate multiple viable approaches;
- *Constraint prioritisation*: ability to identify and act on most critical constraints.

Table 2 proposes a provisional assessment rubric directly derived from the principles in Table 1. This rubric shifts the focus towards evaluating how the learner navigates the process of perceiving and acting upon affordances.

**Table 2.** Affordance-based assessment rubric

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<b>Attunement</b>	Identifies only explicit cues (text content)	Notifies some contextual cues (document format)	Detects subtle professional signals (tone, legal implications)	Anticipates latent cues (institutional norms, client urgency)
<b>Strategic Adaptation</b>	Adapts only if guided throughout	Able to adapt with only initial guidance	Able to adapt with almost no guidance	Adapts optimal strategies independently
<b>Solution Diversity</b>	Proposes 1 linear solution	Generates 2+ alternatives	Develops 2+ context-sensitive options	Creates tiered strategies (priority-based)
<b>Constraint Prioritisation</b>	Treats all constraints equally	Recognises key constraints post-feedback	Weighs constraints proactively	Dynamically re-prioritises prior to and mid-task
<b>Professional Calibration</b>	Relies on trial-and-error	Demonstrates basic awareness of professional standards	Adapts to cultural/organisational norms	Innovates beyond standards and can mentor others

These activities and tools are designed to develop ‘off-the-word’ strategic competences essential to translation service provision through situated practice, perceptual training, and professional socialisation in plausibly realistic learning environments. The intent is not to condition learners to associate specific events with rigid responses, but to create an

ecology of conditions fostering flexible perceptual engagement and readiness to identify actionable pathways. This approach encourages autonomy, allowing individuals to navigate complex situations without prescribing specific actions. Future iterations could explore communication between translator and author, payment negotiations, or purpose-driven translation briefs. Section 6 will consider the implementation challenges and future research directions.

## 6. Discussion

This framework is designed for application across educational contexts. Three key principles derived from GBAs and ED guide its implementation:

- Manipulating pedagogical constraints to foreground critical affordances.
- Promoting perceptual attunement through representative design.
- Leverage affordance perception and shared affordances in collaborative tasks.

These principles map directly to translation contexts: where basketball players read defenders (affordance perception), translators sense clients' needs; where swimmers adapt to water resistance (attunement), translators suit stylistic choices to audiences; where football teams coordinate passes (shared affordance), translators and project managers align on assignment-specific constraints.

The framework is scalable. Preliminary implementation and action research suggest effective application across different class sizes, from small tutorial groups to large cohorts, and in blended learning configurations, based on observations of learners' engagement and feedback on their learning experience. However, cross-institutional adoption presents predictable yet significant challenges.

A primary hurdle is educator readiness. Limited time and divergent pedagogical philosophies can hinder engagement with these methods that require continuous development and may not align with all teaching styles. Addressing practical workloads could mitigate this challenge, depending on institutional organisation and the establishment of clear protocols. In some contexts, like certain universities in Hong Kong, trained Teaching Assistants (TAs) could offer essential support in assessment and feedback, lightening the educator's workload.

Another challenge is access to resources. Not every translation department has a direct connection to industry professionals. Digital solutions, such as open-access resources from professional organisations and structured virtual events with practitioners can help address this issue.

A critical challenge and key area for future investigation is assessment. Developing robust frameworks evaluating performer-environment interaction is complex. In addition, the problematic relationship between collaborative professional practices and individual assessment is another venue of tension that also emerged during the action research project (Musumeci, 2025 p. 178). Educators must grapple with evaluating individual perceptual attunement in team-performance without undermining the collaborative values the framework aims to foster. While the provisional rubric (Table 2) is a step

forward, and the framework's flexibility allows educators to customise rubrics according to their institution, standardising reliable criteria for cross-institutional adoption would enhance the impact of this framework integration.

## 7. Closing remarks

This study has proposed a bridge between sports and translation pedagogies through an ecological framework grounded in affordance perception, constraint-led design, and co-construction of plausible simulated environments (*class-icosis*). By framing learning as a dynamic performer-environment relationship, this synthesis is an initial structure to cultivate the strategic, adaptive competences required in the practice of translation. This interdisciplinary bridge attempts to go beyond “mapping the coordinates of one epistemic system onto another” (Robinson, 2024, p. 12) or analogic application of techniques. Being enriched and informed by practice, this translational process is not “limited to theoretical projects” (Robinson, 2024, p. 13).

Instead, it demonstrates how knowledge and pedagogical principles from one epistemic system (sports science) can be translated to address core challenges within another (translation education) to create a novel, integrated methodology. As Bennett and Neves (2024, p. 2) suggest, such translation puts different epistemic systems “into dialogue”, fulfilling the basic translational need of connecting, of becoming infrastructure where nothing stood, between previously disconnected plots.

The contribution brought by GBAs and ED to translation education is the theoretical foundation for designing, implementing, and assessing situated learning environments, intentionally targeting and developing these competences. This framework offers a systematic pedagogy focused on perception and action, ensuring contextualised and representative tasks that build transferable skills.

Therefore, this research does not seek to supplant existing situated learning activities but to augment them integrating sports pedagogy's rigorous focus on the quality of adaptive responses to dynamic environments. GBAs and ED provide a unique lens on adaptation, operationalised through constraint manipulation and affordance perception assessment, offering concrete tools that were previously lacking.

Ultimately, the goal is to equip learners not with a rigid checklist of procedures, but with a calibrated perceptual and strategic agility to perceive, navigate, and adapt to the ever-shifting demands of professional practice in the language service sector.

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