Chapter 7:

Translating Experience: Turning Classroom Theory into Real-World Research under IKU 2

Nine Febrie Novitasari
(Universitas Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo)
ninefebrie@gmail.com

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's higher education sector faces a dual mandate: sustaining academic rigor while producing globally competitive graduates. This imperative is sharpened by the *Kampus Merdeka–Merdeka Belajar (MBKM*) policy, which operationalizes performance through Main Performance Indicators (*Indikator Kinerja Utama/IKU*). Remarkably, *IKU 2* (Students' Off-Campus Experiences) requires institutions to facilitate high-quality, credit-bearing activities such as internships, village development projects, and undergraduate research (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2021). The key challenge, therefore, is how specific academic subjects, such as Translation, which often remains a theoretical in-class activity, can be evolved into a structured, experiential learning vehicle that meets the rigor and volume required by *IKU 2*.

Unfortunately, conventional translation pedagogy in foreign language teaching has often been criticized as passive, with emphasis on theory and text manipulation detached from authentic professional contexts. While translation is demonstrably effective for cultivating intercultural and linguistic awareness, persistent gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical application remain (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016; Hasbi et al., 2025a; Kiraly, 2015). Addressing this gap requires an applied, research-based approach:

systematically integrating students into authentic translation research projects (Guo et al., 2020; (Xu & Tao, 2023)

This chapter elaborates that involving students in translation research provides a powerful form of experiential learning that supports the goals of *IKU 2*. Through research activities, students apply linguistic theories to real-world situations—such as analyzing the readability of restaurant menus in tourism areas—thereby connecting academic knowledge with practical, industry-related outcomes (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017; Tomlinson, 2011). By doing so, programs can demonstrate their contribution to *IKU 2* through clear and measurable outcomes, such as tangible deliverables, active collaboration with external partners, and documented improvements in students' employability skills (Panadero, 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

B. DISCUSSION

Research-led translation projects offer authentic learning that surpasses transmission-based instruction. When students participate in the full inquiry cycle, like problem framing, data collection, analysis, and reporting, they combine conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and professional dispositions such as ethical awareness, project management, and data literacy (Blankesteijn et al., 2024; Hasbi et al., 2025b; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). This aligns with the experiential learning cycle in which classroom theories are applied, tested, and reflected upon in specific contexts (Kolb, 1984).

To translate these pedagogical insights into practice, lecturers can implement a structured series of steps that guide students through every stage of translation research, ensuring both academic depth and experiential authenticity. Here are the sample procedures to involve students in a translation research project. This project was initiated to analyze the readability level of the menu in some restaurants in Tapal Kuda area in East Java. The model of student involvement developed

in this project can serve as a practical guide for other similar initiatives. The implementation stages can be organized as follows:

1. Orientation and Training Stage

In this initial phase, lecturers introduce the research topic, objectives, and key concepts such as readability and acceptability. Students receive short training sessions on research ethics, interview techniques, and the use of digital tools such as Microsoft Excel and readability calculators. Small-scale simulations are conducted to help students grasp the overall research procedure in a concrete and accessible way.

2. Collaborative Planning Stage

Students are actively involved in designing research instruments, including observation sheets, interview guides, and questionnaires. This participatory process fosters their sense of ownership toward the project and deepens their conceptual understanding of the research focus. Group discussions are facilitated to identify real problems encountered in field-based translation practices.

3. Data Collection Stage

Students are divided into small teams with specific responsibilities. Some are assigned to conduct interviews, others to distribute questionnaires, and the remaining members to handle documentation, including observation and video recording. Each group maintains a daily logbook that records their activities, challenges, and reflections throughout the data collection process.

4. Data Analysis Stage

In this stage, students learn how to organize raw data, input results into Microsoft Excel, and conduct both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Lecturers guide them in interpreting findings, verifying data validity, and relating the results to existing theories in translation and applied linguistics. This stage reinforces analytical thinking and methodological awareness.

5. Dissemination and Reflection Stage

In the final phase, students assist in preparing the research report, designing academic posters, and completing the funding report. They are also encouraged to produce creative outputs such as educational videos, short reels, or infographics to make the research findings more accessible to a broader audience.

In applied projects like menu readability studies, students act as investigators rather than passive recipients. They learn to operationalize constructs (e.g., readability indices), implement qualitative and quantitative procedures, and interpret findings for stakeholders in tourism and hospitality (Kuznik & Olalla-Soler, 2018; Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017). Such projects cover the broader social and economic stakes of translation quality: readable menus shape tourist comprehension, influence perceived value, and can affect purchase decisions. These activities also require attention to validity, reliability, and ethical compliance, strengthening students' methodological judgment (Hasbi et al., 2024; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

Beyond disciplinary knowledge, this model cultivates transferable soft and hard skills. Students report gains in analytical writing, research ethics, teamwork, and communication with non-academic partners; they also strengthen methodological competence in corpus use, coding, statistics, and reporting conventions (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017). Embedding research-based tasks in translation modules thus bridges the academy–industry divide, supports curriculum relevance, and contributes to IKU 2 attainment through verifiable off-campus, impact-oriented learning (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016; Hidajat et al., 2015; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

From a curriculum perspective, these projects can be adapted across different course levels. Institutions may begin with small-scale, inquiry-based tasks in the early semesters and gradually progress to

capstone projects that involve collaboration with external partners in later stages. Assessment can cover both the process, such as proposal quality, ethical readiness, and data management, and the final product, including research reports or executive briefs for industry partners. Clear rubrics should be developed to ensure that each component aligns with the learning goals and the performance indicators outlined in *IKU 2* (Panadero, 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). Practical steps may include providing gradual tool training, such as using readability calculators and corpus software, setting clear milestones supported by short reflective briefs, and sharing research findings with partner institutions through concise, decision-focused presentations.

Ultimately, this project offers a response to the two key challenges mentioned in the opening of this chapter. First, from a pedagogical perspective, it highlights the importance of field-based experiences in enriching students' understanding of translation theories. Second, from a methodological standpoint, it proposes a replicable model of student involvement that can be integrated into translation curricula in higher education.

C. REFLECTION

Building on the implementation stages described previously, it is essential to reflect on the practical realities of applying this model in diverse classroom and institutional contexts. Through the given sample of procedure, students gradually progress from guided participants to independent researchers. This model not only exemplifies the principles of research-based learning but also aligns with Indonesia's IKU 2 performance metric, which emphasizes providing authentic, off-campus learning experiences that enhance employability and academic relevance.

Despite strong pedagogical benefits, implementation is not without challenges. Common barriers include limited prior exposure to research methods, uneven statistical readiness, time-management

pressures, and variability in access to authentic datasets or industry partners (Panadero, 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). Without structured guidance and adequate support, these challenges can increase cognitive load and potentially reduce the overall learning impact (Muthmainnah & Hasbi, 2022).

As a whole, reflection on the implementation of this model shows that student involvement in translation research not only enriches their learning experience but also strengthens the connection between theory, practice, and the social contexts in which translation operates. This model directly supports the achievement of Indonesia's *Main Performance Indicator 2 (IKU 2)*, which emphasizes providing students with meaningful, off-campus learning experiences that foster independence, collaboration, and real-world engagement. With sustained institutional support and ongoing collaboration with external partners such as tourism offices, local businesses, and cultural institutions, research-based learning can become an integral component of a translation curriculum that remains relevant to industry and community needs. Consequently, students gain not only linguistic awareness and methodological competence but also develop professional and social sensitivity as future translators who are capable of contributing meaningfully to both the professional field and society at large.

AUTHOR

Nine Febrie Novitasari, S.Pd., M.Pd. is a lecturer at Universitas Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo. She has academic experience in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics. Her research interests include media and material development, teacher professional development, and English for Young Learners. Besides teaching, she is actively involved in community service and

academic publications. She can be reached through email ninefebrie@gmail.com.

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