

*Elena Aguirre Fernández Bravo & María Dolores Guindal Pintado\*\**

## **Entrepreneurship in Interpreting: A Blue Ocean Strategy Didactic Toolkit for Higher Education Interpreter Training**

### **Abstract**

This article aims at presenting the reader with a didactic proposal for training higher education interpreting students in entrepreneurial skills by means of introducing a toolkit based on the Blue Ocean Strategy marketing theory. First, the reasons why entrepreneurship is necessary and should thus be an integral part of the interpreting curriculum will be put forward. Second, the Blue Ocean Strategy and its special suitability for the interpreting market will be argued. Third, the transposition of this theory into the interpreting classroom will be explained, with a focus on the approach and development of the lesson plan and didactic materials, which were devised on the basis of a flipped learning teaching methodology. Fourth, the results of the pilot implementation of this toolkit in the dialogue interpreting course *Interpretación II: Técnicas de mediación intercultural*, a 6 ECTS B.A. in Translation and Interpreting course at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas (Madrid), will be discussed by way of analysing 45 responses to questionnaires designed with the purpose of shedding light on whether perceptions of the interpreting market substantially differ among students who made part of the experimental group that took the Blue Ocean Strategy pilot class (18 subjects) and the control group (27 subjects), who did not receive training in this marketing strategy.

### **Keywords**

interpreter training; higher education; didactic toolkit; flipped learning; entrepreneurship; blue ocean strategy.

## **1. Introduction: Entrepreneurship in the interpreting curriculum**

In a global context that demands educational opportunities to “provide the competences and skills required for European citizenship, innovation and employment” (EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015: 2), striving for excellence in higher education interpreter training must necessarily be translated into a holistic approach to learning. This will provide students with a skill set that will not only qualify them to successfully perform the interpreting task per se, but will also enable them to navigate the sometimes tempestuous waters of developing a prosperous professional career by finding their own market space, thus standing out among other young graduates. The EHEA ministers gathered in Yerevan in May 2015 forthrightly declared that enhancing not only the quality but also the relevance of learning and teaching is the main mission of the European Higher Education Area. Within that framework, they highlighted the importance of providing incentives “for institutions, teachers and students to intensify activities that develop creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship” so that study programmes can “enable students to develop the competences that can best satisfy personal aspirations and societal needs, through effective learning activities” (EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015: 2).

In 2005, a survey was conducted by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) among Translation and Interpreting graduates, employers and professors to enquire about the transversal and specific competences considered key for translators and interpreters. Results were already in line with this line of thought: among the employers interviewed,

---

\* *Elena Aguirre Fernández Bravo*  
*Departamento de Traducción e Interpretación*  
*y Comunicación Multilingüe*  
*Universidad Pontificia Comillas*  
*E-mail: eaguirre@comillas.edu*

*María Dolores Guindal Pintado*  
*Departamento de Traducción e Interpretación*  
*y Comunicación Multilingüe*  
*Universidad Pontificia Comillas*  
*E-mail: mdguindal@comillas.edu*

sense of initiative and entrepreneurship ranked third on the list of most important transversal systemic competences, only surpassed by motivation for quality and autonomous learning (ANECA 2005: 82). According to the same source, even graduates thought entrepreneurship was more relevant for translators and interpreters than other significant skills such as creativity or leadership. If we take a look at the importance allocated to these same competences depending on the different professional profiles a graduate in Translation and Interpreting could specialise in (ANECA 2005: 95), we will see that respondents granted more importance to developing entrepreneurial skills if one is to work as a dialogue interpreter than as a translator, lexicographer or project manager. As per Galán-Mañas (2017), the results of a survey carried out among graduates in Translation and Interpreting at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona showed that six to nine years after graduating 34.6% of them had created business projects of their own. Should this rate be transposable to other Universities in Spain, one out of three Translation and Interpreting graduates would likely end up having to decide on a business approach and strategy, since they would have to make the choice between competing in a cutthroat market or creating uncontested market space once they graduate –in other words, over one third of all graduates in Translation and Interpreting will probably become entrepreneurs.

Although currently very popular in business and marketing contexts, the term **entrepreneur** was first introduced in French at the beginning of the XVI century to designate men involved in military expeditions, and it was not until 1755 that the term was used in an economic sense by French writer Richard Cantillon, then referring to the process of facing uncertainty (Del Teso Díez 2000: 17). According to Kickul/Lyons (2012), there are many definitions of entrepreneurship—each one highlighting different elements, e.g. purely economic aspects, the importance of making connections and building networks, innovation as the key factor, or leadership, thinking and reasoning skills. Despite variations, some general aspects appear to be universal:

Entrepreneurs actively seek out opportunities to innovate in order to add value to the lives of their customers. They pursue a strategy of growth in order to expand their business's market reach and profits. They are strategic in the way they manage their enterprises, and they ably build networks among their investors, suppliers, and customers in order to achieve their business goals. While they are not necessarily risk takers, they are invariably risk managers (Kickul/Lyons 2012: 15).

Strategic leadership, fundamental to successfully compete in the global marketplace, is a key factor in entrepreneurship, as it requires three interdependent activities, namely: setting a direction (through scanning the environment and getting to know the stakeholders involved), designing the organization (implementing the leader's vision and strategy) and nurturing a culture dedicated to excellence with high ethical standards, as well as effective leadership skills such as the ability to overcome barriers to change, the effective use of power and integrative thinking skills (Dess et al. 2012).

Drucker (1985) suggests there are seven sources of innovative opportunity which may represent a powerful tool for managing entrepreneurial businesses: the unexpected, incongruities, process needs, market and industry structures, demographics, changes in perception and new knowledge. We believe it is of paramount importance that students become familiar with the foundations of positive and creative marketing, hopefully empowering them to avoid commoditisation while learning the best market practices.

As market newcomers, we believe it will be easier for soon-to-be interpreters to adopt a fresh attitude towards competition, based on a healthy view of entrepreneurship and leadership: an approach to the market that will help them thrive professionally and grow profitably, without frustrating them. For that purpose, we would like to present the reader a pilot initiative designed to teach entrepreneurship in *Interpretación II: Técnicas de mediación intercultural*, a 6 ECTS undergraduate dialogue interpreting course pertaining to the junior-year of the B.A. in Translation and Interpreting at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas. A didactic toolkit devised from a flipped learning methodological approach (Bergmann/Sams 2012) and based on the popular Blue Ocean Strategy marketing theory (Kim/Mauborgne 2005) was introduced to an experimental group of

18 students, and their perceptions on the interpreting market were compared to those of the control group (27 subjects), to see whether this training in entrepreneurship had an impact on their views and thoughts.

Our 18-subject experimental group was made of four male and 14 female junior-year students majoring in Translation and Interpreting. The control group is a demographically similar class that was also enrolled in this summer-semester course. At this stage of the undergraduate program, courses are gradually less theoretical and more practical, so that undergraduates begin to have a first-hand experience of what their future work may be like. The summer semester is also the point when students are asked to prepare their applications for their senior practicum, when they are engaged by Spanish companies and institutions to do part-time real supervised work. At this learning moment, many of them are also already identifying their research areas of interest for their final-year dissertations, which can also address aspects related to the professional market.

The course *Interpretación II: Técnicas de mediación intercultural* contributes to this gradual professionalisation of the curriculum, as it is very much based on role plays which aim at letting the students find their own tools and resources in a semi-real bilateral interpreting situation, in areas ranging from media to business or medical.

Therefore, the end of the summer semester, when we presented our didactic proposal introducing a toolkit based on the Blue Ocean Strategy marketing theory, is in our opinion the best timing, as the subjects are then starting a transition period into the professional world.

## 2. The Blue Ocean Strategy and its suitability for the interpreting market

Today's language service providers, and interpreting professionals in particular, are affected by a number of issues that are repeatedly addressed in formal and informal forums. Current specialised conferences, scholarly papers and professional blog articles focus on three main hot topics: the advent of artificial intelligence; the shrinking demand due to the fact that more and more professionals master the English language and use it as their lingua franca in business; and the growing supply in the interpreting market resulting from the increase in the number of undergraduate programs in Translation and Interpreting that has taken place over the last decade.

In view of the above, the interpreting market is no different from other markets, as one could safely assert that new technologies, supply and demand are the main concerns of any 21st-century industry. Consequently, professionals in all industries and sectors have traditionally tried and currently try to present and market themselves as the best choice in front of potential clients. When doing so, marketing strategists have historically taken two diverging approaches.

The first one of them is **competitive strategy**. The main representative of this school of thought is Michael Porter (1980, 1985), who described three generic strategies that a company may follow to pursue competitive advantage in its chosen market: cost leadership strategy, where the company adopts a low cost position; differentiation, where the specific needs of customers are satisfied in exchange for a higher price; and focus, which can be applied in conjunction with any of the above, and aims at serving very few niche markets.

The second approach is **value innovation strategy**. Prahalad/Hamel (1990, 1994, cit. in Madsen/Slatten 2019: 4) were the first to refer to the creation of new market space using the term **white spaces**. Other scholars further developed this concept, but it did not really take off until 2005, when Harvard professors W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne published a decade-long study of over 150 success stories in more than 30 industries spanning beyond 100 years. This publication was entitled *Blue Ocean Strategy*. In all 150 success stories analysed by Kim and Mauborgne, companies had managed to create uncontested market space, what they called **blue oceans**. The terms **red oceans**, **blue oceans**, and **blue ocean strategy** (hereinafter also referred to as BOS) have become business vernacular ever since.

Although some voices have argued that BOS has only gained popularity thanks to the support of Harvard University and the INSEAD Institute despite being too simplistic and lacking an academic and scientific corpus (Madsen/Slatten 2019), we have chosen this strategy for our didactic proposal based on two main reasons. First, BOS is heavily supported by marketing and business strategy consulting firms –consequently, students will have a great array of accessible, non-academic materials available if they want to study this theory further; secondly, the concept behind Blue Ocean Strategy is mainly focused on serving others, and the professional is personally accountable for creating a successful career for him- or herself. Service and responsibility are core values for many higher education institutions (Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2019), so choosing this strategy for the purposes of helping our students develop their entrepreneurial skills seemed pertinent.

## 2.1. Blue vs red oceans

In order to understand the BOS, we must first provide an explanation of the terminology itself. In the words of Kim/Mauborgne (2005: 4-5):

(...) imagine a market universe composed by two sorts of oceans: red oceans and blue oceans. Red oceans represent all the industries in existence today. This is the known market space. Blue oceans denote all the industries *not* in existence today. This is the unknown market space. In the red oceans, boundaries are defined and accepted, and the competitive rules of the game are known. Here, companies try to outperform their rivals to grab a greater share of existing demand. As the market space gets crowded, prospects for profits and growth are reduced. Products become commodities, and cutthroat competition turns the red ocean bloody. Blue oceans, in contrast, are defined by untapped market space, demand creation, and the opportunity for highly profitable growth. [...] In blue oceans, competition is irrelevant because the rules of the game are waiting to be set.

According to the authors, corporate strategists are heavily influenced by military strategy, where two armies fight over limited terrain. However, they suggest that in order to beat the competition, companies should stop confronting the opponent fighting over market share. Instead, they should have the capacity to create new market space that is uncontested. But how?

## 2.2. Value innovation: the cornerstone of Blue Ocean Strategy

In their study, Kim/Mauborgne (2005) realised that creators of blue oceans did not use the competition as their benchmark –they did not focus on beating the competition, but on making the competition irrelevant by creating a leap in value for buyers and for their company, i.e. **value innovation**. It is solely through value innovation that new uncontested market space is opened. Value innovation places equal emphasis on value and innovation. Value without innovation tends to focus on value creation on an incremental scale, something that improves value but is not enough to make a player stand out in the marketplace (Kim/Mauborgne 2005: 12-13). For instance, an interpreter could offer the complete package of interpreting services, not only including the interpreting team, but also the technical equipment. This is a leap in value, but the client could certainly have received the same end product otherwise.

Innovation without value tends to be technology-driven, market pioneering, or futuristic, often shooting beyond what buyers are ready to accept and pay for. In this sense, it is important to distinguish between value innovation as opposed to technology innovation and market pioneering (Kim/Mauborgne 2005: 13). An example is clearly found in Google's live language translation feature: although their on-stage demo in 2017 got enthusiastic rounds of applause, this futuristic service does not match buyers' needs just yet.

Value innovation defies one of the most accepted dogmas of competition-based strategy: the value-cost trade-off. In red oceans, companies make a choice between differentiation or low cost; however, those who seek to create blue oceans pursue differentiation and low cost simultaneously (Kim/Mauborgne 2005: 13). Blue oceans are created when costs are driven down while value

is driven up for buyers. Costs are saved by reducing or even eliminating the factors an industry competes on and which are not perceived as valuable by buyers. Buyer value is increased by incorporating elements the industry has never offered Kim/Mauborgne (2005: 16). It is important to note that those who are new to BOS often confuse two very different concepts: low cost vs low pricing. When Kim and Mauborgne refer to **low cost**, under no circumstances are they referring to **low pricing**. Usual examples of BOS are high-end enterprises such as Cirque du Soleil, Starbucks, or Dyson.

In brief, red ocean strategy, the most usual strategy in today's market, competes in the existing market space, focuses on beating the competition, exploits existing demand, makes the value-cost trade-off, and aligns a firm's whole system with its strategic choice of differentiation or low cost. On the other hand, blue ocean strategy strives to create uncontested market space, make competition irrelevant, create and capture new demand, break the value-cost trade-off, and align the whole system in pursuit of differentiation and low cost (2005: 18).

### **3. Developing a Blue Ocean Strategy-based didactic toolkit**

Teaching entrepreneurial skills in higher education is not new: Cavero Clerencia/Ruiz Quejido (2017) compile a series of initiatives from institutions of renowned international prestige, such as the MIT, Stanford or Cambridge, as well as best practices in Spanish universities (Universidad Carlos III, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Universidad Pompeu Fabra or Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña, among others). It is important to notice, though, that most of these initiatives are envisaged for Management and/or Engineering students, areas that are more traditionally linked to developing new business ventures. However, as we have argued, it is our belief that developing entrepreneurial competence can also be useful for future interpreters, which is why we thought it was pertinent to develop a module for Interpreting students to improve certain skills in this area of knowledge. We thus created a didactic toolkit made up of four instruments whose justification and specific usefulness is further detailed in 3.2.1. Identifying a clear focal point tends to be productive in pilot experiences like the one we are describing. Thus, out of the four competence categories included in the broader concept of entrepreneurship that Silveyra León et al. (2017) identified through an extensive literature review (entrepreneurial, business/management, human/relational and interpersonal skills), we decided to spotlight entrepreneurial skills, which we consider the main and more generalist level of this competence. The other three should nevertheless be considered in further, more comprehensive attempts at translating entrepreneurship into a teachable concept for Interpreting students.

#### **3.1. Teaching entrepreneurial skills to future interpreters through a flipped learning methodology**

When it came to choosing the most appropriate teaching methodology for introducing entrepreneurship in our classroom, we did not hesitate: our experience with the Flipped Learning (hereinafter also referred to as FL) methodology, successfully implemented in our Interpreting B.A. courses since academic year 2016-2017, made us think this was also the right approach for designing the BOS didactic toolkit. Flipped learning (originally conceived as flipped classroom by Bergman/Sams 2012) involves doing at home what was traditionally done in the classroom, and using class time to practice actual skills, something that we thought could prove especially fruitful for entrepreneurship. Another aspect worth mentioning of this methodology is that it enables a more customised learning experience that in turn fosters learning autonomy, self-assessment skills, the optimization of time and better student-teacher interaction dynamics. Flipping the classroom has had, in our experience, great acceptance among students.

Our usual way of teaching interpreting-related concepts with the FL methodology invariably involves some common elements that were also present in this pilot experience: we always start by preparing sets of materials for students to work autonomously on theoretical concepts (course

notes, scientific papers, or pre-recorded video lessons). We make such contents available to students on our Learning Management System in a timely manner, so that they can find the time to work on them prior to the face-to-face class. Every session is structured around the four stages of the cooperative session: the activation of prior content knowledge and task-orientation, content presentation, information processing and recapitulation (Colegio Ártica, Innovation Department 2015). Beyond that, sessions vary in terms of the specific activity formats and the tools employed: speeches, videos or playlists from different repositories; our own pre-recorded learning pills; rubrics that we use for self- and peer-assessment dynamics; or interactive, ad hoc materials such as quizzes, tests, mind maps or learning landscapes created with different apps.

### 3.2. The Blue Ocean Strategy lesson plan and class development

In their second book, Kim/Mauborgne (2017) present a holistic model of market-creating strategy based on five steps. For the purposes of our class, we decided to focus on steps 2 (Understanding where you are now), 3 (Imagine where you could be), and 4 (Find how you get there), which are more general and not specifically directed to existing companies or entrepreneurs already exploring the market.

For each of these steps, the authors suggest several analytic tools and frameworks which help strategists create a blue ocean in their industry. These materials are particularly optimal for flipped classroom, as they are twofold: on the one hand, students need to individually understand the theory behind the tool; and on the other, they can be given the chance to reflect in groups and benefit from others' input to reach a more in-depth analysis.

Since, as mentioned above, FL is highly based on the autonomous previous work of the student, we will explain the lesson plan according to a timeline: before, during and after the face-to-face class.

#### 3.2.1. Before class: The Blue Ocean Strategy toolkit

Following FL principles, students were delivered the more conceptual or theoretical portion of the learning unit before the in-class activity and had to work on the material outside of the classroom. Although our first intention was to use genuine material created by the authors, quality specific audio-visual media on each of the tools was not available. Then, we entertained the possibility of preparing four texts to facilitate this knowledge to our students. However, we soon ruled it out, as our students (aged 20-22) have repeatedly proved that they engage better and are more motivated to complete out-of-class activities if they are in audio-visual form. Consequently, we created a playlist<sup>1</sup> including: (1) two YouTube videos introducing an overview to BOS published by Harvard University, and (2) four 3-minute videos prepared by the teacher briefly explaining the basics of four of the tools used by the authors in *Blue Ocean Shift*.

The full process presented by Kim/Mauborgne (2017) is made up of 5 steps and multiple tools and frameworks. Due to time constraints and to the fact that our pilot only aims at providing an introduction to this marketing strategy, we decided to focus on the four tools which are most representative of BOS. We skipped steps 1 and 5, as they are rather aimed at businesses or entrepreneurs who have already been operating in the market and already have an actual offering. If the reader is interested in a detailed description of each of the tools and specific case studies, we recommend the resources published online by the creators of Blue Ocean Strategy. Below we briefly define each of the tools we found most relevant to our pilot experience. Table 1 at the end of this section further delves into their didactic use and provides some examples from different industries:

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIEE5J-R\\_uY&list=PLPunVRmUIIH3R8xQ8KRDd8Pa\\_1DJxSB9W&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIEE5J-R_uY&list=PLPunVRmUIIH3R8xQ8KRDd8Pa_1DJxSB9W&index=6)

**The strategy canvas** (Kim/Mauborgne 2017: 120-141) is a one-page visual self-assessment with two axes: the horizontal axis specifies the 5 to 12 key factors the industry historically competed on and invested in; while the vertical axis captures the offering level buyers receive or experience for each of an industry's key competing factors. Please note that key competing factors do not equate to value factors for buyers. "The completed strategy canvas provides not only a compelling, objective case for why a blue ocean shift is in order—or not in order—but also a good baseline against which to evaluate new ideas" (Kim/Mauborgne 2017: 140).

**The buyer utility map** (Kim/Mauborgne 2017: 147-165) outlines the full range of experiences buyers have when using an industry's offering, thus revealing the problems the industry has failed to address. The horizontal axis sequentially captures the six distinct stages into which a customer's experience can be broken down: purchase, delivery, use, supplements, maintenance, and disposal. The vertical axis displays the major levers organizations can pull to provide greater utility for users: customer productivity, simplicity, convenience, risk reduction, fun and image, and environmental friendliness. This creates a grid of 36 utility spaces, most of which are often unexplored in red oceans.

These first two tools are, in our opinion, the most relevant for the Spanish interpreting market, as associations and freelance professionals very often focus on abstract concepts such as quality or professionalism, while clients tend to also factor in other aspects. In fact, some of the most recognised research studies conducted in the late 1900s and in the early 2000s (e.g. Bühler 1986 and Kurz 2001) indicate that interpreters and users do not share the same expectations when asked about the quality of an interpretation.

**The three tiers of noncustomers** (Kim/Mauborgne 2017: 176-186) aims at unlocking new utility for noncustomers, since the aim of making a blue ocean shift is to stop competing for existing customers and to create new demand and grow the industry. First-tier noncustomers are all the soon-to-be noncustomers of an industry. They are buyers who use current market offerings minimally while in search for something better. They will eagerly jump ship as soon as they discover a superior alternative. Second-tier noncustomers are refusing noncustomers, i.e. people who have consciously rejected current market offerings because another industry's offering better meets their needs or because our industry's is beyond their means. Third-tier noncustomers are the furthest away from an industry's existing customers. These are unexplored noncustomers who are not targeted by any of the industry's players, because their needs have always been assumed to belong to other industries. This tool allows strategists to see that there is clear scope for creating new demand.

This tool can be used by students to reflect upon the following questions: Can new interpreting demand be created? Who are the soon-to-be noncustomers of our industry? What clients plainly refuse to use interpreting services? What segments have never been explored?

**The six paths framework** (Kim/Mauborgne 2017: 189-218) provides six systematic ways to shift the lens strategists use in looking at the market universe and opens up a new value-cost frontier. Path by path, the authors prompt strategists to think out of the red ocean box by: (1) looking across alternative industries; (2) looking across strategic groups within your industry; (3) looking across the chain of buyers and redefine the industry buyer group; (4) looking across complementary products and service offerings; (5) rethinking the functional-emotional orientation of your industry; (6) participating in shaping external trends over time.

This fourth tool is a summary of all the above, to some extent. It allows those students who have not worked on the strategy canvas, the buyer utility map or the six paths framework to approach BOS from another standpoint and, therefore, to reach different conclusions. Also, when presented to the other groups, this tool allows the class to further bolster their hypotheses.

TOOL	DIDACTIC USE	QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION	EXAMPLE FROM ANOTHER INDUSTRY
<b>Strategy Canvas</b>	Thanks to the Strategy Canvas students will be able to understand that competitors usually focus on the same factors that customers end up taking for granted. We can differentiate from our competitors by adjusting these factors, particularly by creating new ones.	<p><i>What factors are interpreters currently competing on? Price? Quality?</i></p> <p><i>What factors are interpreters currently investing in? Equipment? Marketing?</i></p> <p><i>Do these factors provide value to the customer? How can we create more value while reducing our costs? Do any of these factors have ethical implications?</i></p>	<p>If we looked at the Strategy Canvas of the circus industry prior to the creation of Cirque du Soleil, players mainly focused on having the most famous stars, the most amazing animal shows and the funniest clowns. However, Cirque du Soleil reduced their offering to a minimum and created new factors: unique venue, main theme, and music and dance.</p> <p>They created a new industry that, in the customer's mind, had nothing to do with traditional circus.</p> <p>Is there any way we can create a new industry that, in the customer's mind, has nothing to do with traditional interpreting?</p>
<b>Buyer Utility Map</b>	The Buyer Utility Map allows students to walk in their customer's shoes and examine closely all phases of an interpreting assignment.	<p><i>How can we simplify each of the six stages? Can the purchase stage, for instance, be more convenient for our client? Can we help our client run fewer risks when engaging an interpreter? Can we reduce the carbon footprint of any of the stages?</i></p>	<p>When ActiFry air fryers were first designed, strategists identified the main pain points buyers faced when they acquired a fryer: much oil was used, which was later difficult to recycle; frying was smelly; fryers were difficult to manipulate and clean. By taking oil out of the equation, many of the pain points simply vanished.</p> <p>Is there anything we can add in or take out of the equation and have many of our clients' pain points simply vanish?</p>

<b>Three Tiers of Noncustomers</b>	Students understand that if current interpreting clients mainly decide based on price, they can always find new clients—people who could benefit from using interpreting services but don't.	<i>Are there clients who reluctantly use interpreting services? Who are they? Why are they reluctant? Is it due to price? Confidentiality? Convenience? Are there people who have considered using interpreting services but have finally decided not to? Why? What other solutions are they using then? Are these solutions optimal? Are there people who have never used interpreting services but could benefit from them? How?</i>	Taking the translation industry as example: why not offer subtitling or translation services to YouTubers? This would help them reach a larger international audience. Have they ever thought about it? It is a growing industry, and they may be willing to pay the price. Is there any growing industry which could benefit from interpreting services and be willing to pay the price?
<b>Six Paths Framework</b>	The Six Paths Framework allows students to clearly spot where the red ocean is and provides an alternative, which otherwise would not be easily identified.	<i>In our clients' minds, what are the alternatives to interpreting? Why do they decide in favour of those? Who pays for our services? Who actually uses our services? Who has a role to play in making the decision? Are products complementary to interpreting affecting the decision to purchase our service? Are we too based on functionality? Should we use a more emotional sales pitch based on interpersonal communications and connections?</i>	An example of how a company was able to look across complimentary product and service offerings is Barnes and Noble: they chose to not just sell books, but also provide cosy reading areas, a coffee bar and knowledgeable staff. Their store provides an experience that rounds out the entire process of buying a book. Can we provide an experience that rounds the entire interpreting process out?

Table 1. Blue Ocean Strategy Tools. Source: Prepared by the authors

### 3.2.2. During the face-to-face class: Group discussion and fair process

Once students became acquainted with the BOS and the four tools that we selected for this exercise, they were ready for the two 100-minute in-class sessions where the teacher was only a facilitator and students took the lead in their learning process. For the first session, we divided students in the experimental group into four smaller groups—one per tool. Each group was given

a template and specific instructions on how to complete the exercise. Some groups used the iOS application developed by INSEAD, but they all discussed the tool they had been assigned. Although the teacher suggested they summarise their conclusions in an infographic or slide, none of the groups used visuals to present to the rest of the class.

During this first session the teacher walked around to give students the chance to ask for further clarification or details, and students had access to the *Blue Ocean Shift* book to find definitions or examples that could be of use. The teacher served as a mentor to guide them out of demotivation or frustration pits. In general, students seemed uneasy and unsure they were delivering properly, as they showed a red ocean mindset by often repeating “well, this is how things are done in interpreting, it can’t be changed”.

For instance, when confronted by the teacher on how the interpreter’s presence in the room may be a nuisance to a client whose main concern is to appear as a confident and reliable partner to its counterpart, the group in charge of developing the buyer utility map first reacted by plainly rejecting any other possibility: dialogue interpreters *must* be present in the same room. However, by stepping into the client’s shoes, they were able to devise other very creative alternatives which allow for good interpreting input while out of the room.

At the beginning, the group assigned to the three tiers of noncustomers could only think of one or two unexplored customers, however ended up suggesting the participation of professional interpreters in sporting events and even in funeral services. These were not far-fetched proposals, but rather serious hypotheses that all members of the group agreed upon and explored as actual business opportunities.

In the next in-class session, the teacher introduced the topic and visually placed each of the tools within the general blue ocean-creation strategy. Then, one by one, the groups presented their conclusions, emulating the fair process recommended by Kim/Mauborgne (2017). At the end of the period all students were contributing their ideas and were fully engaged with the activity.

Once all groups had presented their tools, a discussion was started with no specific guidelines. Students were given the opportunity to criticise the model, express their agreement or disagreement with the conclusions reached by each of the groups, suggest new business models and verbalise some of the issues they were concerned about and that, in their opinion, could be solved by a new interpreting business model. This second 100-minute period ended on a very positive note: Students expressed that the BOS business mindset could be applied to any career opportunity they may be willing to pursue. Indeed, all markets are a priori red oceans, so professionals must always be ready to innovate to solve someone’s problems using their talent and skills.

### **3.2.3. After class: Student feedback and business proposals**

In our pilot, we decided to limit the after phase to a feedback questionnaire with five Likert-scale questions (see below) that we believed would help students reflect upon their learning experience.

*Please rate the activity on Blue Ocean Strategy according to the following criteria using a 1-5 scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.*

QUESTION 1: Relevance to the course. Does the content belong to a course on dialogue interpreting?

1	2	3	4	5
0%	13.3%	33.3%	33.3%	20%

QUESTION 2: Use within my global academic education. Does it further complete my academic education?

1	2	3	4	5
0%	13.3%	20%	33.3%	33.3%

QUESTION 3: Professional relevance once I graduate. Will it help me become a better professional?

1	2	3	4	5
0%	20%	20%	20%	40%

QUESTION 4: Engagement. Was it fun? Did you like the activity? Did you reach interesting conclusions?

1	2	3	4	5
0%	26.7%	33.3%	20%	20%

Table 2. After-class feedback questionnaire. Source: Prepared by the authors

Out of the eighteen students in the experimental group, fifteen submitted answers to the questionnaire. Some were kind enough as to provide additional insight concerning how to improve the experience, with opposing opinions: one student concluded that more time should be devoted to discussion, another one was inclined to developing blue ocean strategies after having presented the tools in class, others would have preferred a full group activity with everyone contributing to completing all tools.

Nevertheless, we may conclude that our students enjoyed the activity overall and that they are appreciative of the lessons learned during this unit. They believe discussing about business strategies in class, although not particularly related to the content of the course at hand, does help them become better educated and better professionals. Given the not-so-positive feedback on the engagement caused, we may have to re-design the activity to include more inviting tasks or present the tools in a more appealing manner, perhaps using visuals.

#### **4. Discussion of results: impact of the pilot experience on student perceptions**

After this pilot didactic experience, we thought it would be interesting to delve into students' perceptions of the interpreting market. First, at a more general level, although determining whether the interpreting industry in Spain is actually a red ocean is out of the scope of this paper, we thought it was relevant to enquire about our students' opinions in this regard. Second, and more specifically, we wanted to know whether the class sessions revolving around the Blue Ocean Strategy didactic toolkit and our students' work on entrepreneurial marketing strategies for interpreters through the FL teaching methodology might have had an impact, positive or negative, on their

market perceptions. For that purpose, we compared the views of our experimental group of students (18) to those of a control group (25) who had not participated in the BOS experience using a 5 item Likert-scale questionnaire based on Kim/Mauborgne's list (2015) of red ocean traps and blue ocean characteristics. Though we used it as a post-experimental questionnaire for research purposes, it is important to note that this form could also easily become a discussion exercise to trigger and introduce the material in a Project-Based-Learning setting, for instance.

For descriptive purposes, it is relevant to highlight that, out of the 45 students that submitted replies, 84.4% declared never having heard about the BOS before, 73.3% admitted they had never read a single book on marketing, and only 35.5% either agreed or strongly agreed that being trained in entrepreneurial skills is key for a future professional interpreter.

Group average scores for each statement (on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree)	Control group	Experimental group
1. The interpreting market in Spain is easily accessible to a new interpreter	2.37	2.67
2. Finding interpreting clients in Spain is not difficult	2.67	2.94
3. The key to finding interpreting clients is finding a niche in the market and specialise	3.89	3.56
4. Solely using technology in interpreting opens up many doors of opportunity in the job market	3.22	3.39
5. Presently, clients only choose in favour of an interpreter based on price	3	3.17

Table 3. Average group scores for each statement on the Spanish interpreting market. Source: prepared by the authors

Table 3 above shows a certain inclination of our students to perceive the Spanish interpreting market as a red, commoditised ocean. Although the size of the sample does not allow for extrapolations concerning a more general interpreting student population, some indicative trends can be described. Concerning statement 1, “the interpreting market in Spain is easily accessible to a new interpreter”, the experimental group showed a slightly more positive view than the control group, with a difference of 0.3 points. A similar pattern (a difference of 0.27 points) is seen for statement 2, “finding interpreting clients in Spain is not difficult”. Statements 4, “solely using technology in interpreting opens up many doors of opportunity in the job market”, and 5, “presently, clients only choose in favour of an interpreter based on price”, present an even lower positive difference among groups. It is interesting to see how the tendency concerning statement 3, “the key to finding interpreting clients is finding a niche in the market and specialise”, is reversed: the score is 0.33 points lower for the experimental group than it is for the control group. This could be due to the fact that, through the BOS, they might have discovered the need for proactively creating *new* unexplored market space, not just finding a pre-existing niche.

In any event, all these remarks can only be considered descriptive and preliminary. They will surely be useful for refining our BOS didactic toolkit pilot proposal, but a larger sample would be necessary to validate whether differences in scores could be considered statistically significant and, thus, a consequence of students consolidating their entrepreneurial skills through a BOS FL learning experience.

## 5. Final remarks

A closer look at Table 3 shows that the students who participated in the pilot experience (both as part of the experimental and control groups) have a relatively pessimistic view on their future professional careers. In general terms, they don't consider the Spanish market easily accessible for newcomers (question 1), and they tend to believe that finding clients is difficult (question 2). Should this also be the case among a broader population of interpreting students, we would be contradicting the mandate entrusted to universities by the EHEA Ministerial Conference (2015), according to which we should "provide the competences and skills required for European citizenship, innovation and **employment**" (emphasis added): how is it that junior-year students have the impression that accessing the interpreting market is so difficult?

Responses to the after-class feedback questionnaire (Table 2) tell us that our students are interested in this type of knowledge: two out of three respondents believe that this type of activities further complete their academic education, and 60% either agree or strongly agree that it helps them become better professionals. These ideas should encourage interpreter trainers to rethink what type of knowledge we are focusing on transferring: shouldn't we be dedicating more time and effort to help our trainees make their way into the interpreting market?

We believe it is of the utmost importance for students to be able to reflect, on the course of their training, upon the market they will soon be a part of, its difficulties and the possibilities it offers. Choosing the B.A.'s junior year to implement the BOS toolkit therefore seems like a good idea: students can further explore entrepreneurship during senior year, and they have the possibility to plan ahead. In further experiences with this learning module, though, besides collecting feedback from participants, we believe that it would be interesting to extend the stage following the in-class session by asking students to draw up (individually or in groups) a serious proposal with suggestions to improve the interpreting market in Spain. Whether in the form of a simple slide or a longer dossier featuring graphs and tables, the proposals could then be shared publicly on social networks or on the course forum to let fellow students (and even professional interpreters) contribute to or discuss on the issues raised.

It is our belief that the Blue Ocean Strategy holds the potential to open up students' minds, fostering a concept of the interpreting profession that is more optimistic and newcomer-friendly than the usual, which might even have a positive impact on their academic performance or, at least, could encourage them to become self-employed entrepreneurs. Such potential lies in (1) making students accountable for creating their own, innovative market space and (2) the fact that it is client-service oriented, thus offering a higher value in what they most appreciate. Besides, BOS emphasises value, not price –students showed an inclination to believe that clients choose based on the price of our services (see question 5 in Table 3), but we do not want them to be content with being precariously employed. On the contrary, we aim at making them realise they can fulfil clients' expectations without compromising profitability and decent working conditions.

Because of the way it is devised methodologically, flipped learning intrinsically instils an autonomous, entrepreneurial-like mindset in students, simultaneously enabling them to acquire the more theoretical knowledge out of the classroom setting, which is ideal to introduce notions such as business, strategy, marketing and employability in time-constrained teaching environments, at least until entrepreneurship strengthens its position and finds a more prominent role among the core competencies in higher education curricular design. This BOS didactic toolkit, further adapted and refined, could be an interesting strategy to address entrepreneurship transversally –and simultaneously– along the different Interpreting courses that are part of the junior and senior years' curricula.

In any case, we believe that the flipped learning methodology is an excellent way to introduce entrepreneurship in the higher education interpreting classroom, since it empowers students to explore concepts by themselves with a more creative, self-guided approach —being out of the market sometimes provides them with a fresher perspective of the sector that holds great untapped potential. Given that red oceans exist in any industry, if students decide to enter the interpreting red

ocean, they may find themselves locked in old ways of thinking fighting a demotivating who-can-do-it-cheaper war. Hopefully, this pilot experience, after reconsideration and further adjustments, might contribute to reframing interpreting students' thinking from red to blue.

## References

- ANECA 2005: *Libro Blanco de la Traducción y la Interpretación en España*. Madrid: Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación [online]. [https://www.ehu.es/documents/1690128/1704927/libro\\_blanco\\_Traducion\\_Interpretacion\\_ANECA.pdf](https://www.ehu.es/documents/1690128/1704927/libro_blanco_Traducion_Interpretacion_ANECA.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2019).
- Bergmann, Jonathan/Sams, Aaron 2012: *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Bühler, Hildegund 1986: Linguistic (semantic) and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for the evaluation of conference interpretation and interpreters. In *Multilingua* 5(4), 231-235.
- Cavero Clerencia, José M./Ruiz Quejido, Diego 2017: Educación para la innovación y el emprendimiento: Una educación para el futuro. Recomendaciones para su impulso. Madrid: Real Academia de Ingeniería.
- Colegio Ártica, Innovation Department 2015: La sesión cooperativa. La interacción al servicio del aprendizaje significativo. In Consejería de Educación de la Junta de Castilla y León (ed.), *Actas del congreso "Las nuevas metodologías en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de las Matemáticas"*, 195-215. Segovia: Junta de Castilla y León y Asociación Castellano y Leonesa de Educación Matemática Miguel de Guzmán.
- Del Teso Díez, Luis 2000: *Entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial: Factores clave para la creación de empresas*. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.
- Dess, Gregory G./Lumpkin, G.T./Eisner, Alan B./McNamara, Gerry/Kim, Bongjin (eds.) 2012: *Strategic Management. Creating competitive advantages*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Drucker, Peter F. 1985: *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practices and Principles*. New York: Harper & Row.
- EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015: *Yerevan Communiqué*. [online] [https://www.eurashe.eu/library/modernising-phe/EHEA\\_2015\\_Yerevan-Communique.pdf](https://www.eurashe.eu/library/modernising-phe/EHEA_2015_Yerevan-Communique.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2019).
- Galán-Mañas, Anabel 2017: Programa para la mejora de la empleabilidad de los egresados en Traducción e Interpretación. Un estudio de caso. In *Conexão Letras* 17, 153-171. [online] [https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/artpub/2017/200158/2017\\_ConexaoLetras\\_Galan.pdf](https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/artpub/2017/200158/2017_ConexaoLetras_Galan.pdf)
- Kickul, Jill/Lyons, Thomas S. 2012: *Understanding Social Entrepreneurship. The relentless Pursuit of Mission in an Ever Changing World*. London: Routledge.
- Kim, W. Chan/Mauborgne, Renée 2017: *Blue ocean shift: beyond competing - proven steps to inspire confidence and seize new growth*. New York, NY: Hachette Books.
- Kim, W. Chan/Mauborgne, Renée 2015: Red Ocean Traps. In *Harvard Business Review*, March 2015.
- Kim, W. Chan/Mauborgne, Renée 2005: *Blue ocean strategy: how to create uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kurz, Ingrid 2001: Conference Interpreting: Quality in the Ears of the User. In *Meta*, 46(2), 394-409.
- Madsen, Dag/Slatten, Kare 2019: Examining the Emergence and Evolution of Blue Ocean Strategy through the Lens of Management Fashion Theory. In *Social Science* 8, 28.
- Porter, Michael Eugene 1985: *Competitive Advantage: creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Porter, Michael Eugene 1980: *Competitive Strategy: techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. New York: The Free Press.
- Silveyra León, Geraldina/Herrero Crespo, Ángel/Pérez Ruiz, Andrea 2017: Competencias en emprendimiento: propuesta de un marco integrador para la educación emprendedora. In Borrás Atiénzas, Francisco/Fernández Laviada, Ana/Martínez García, Francisco Javier (eds.), *El emprendimiento: una aproximación internacional al desarrollo económico*. Santander: Ediciones Universidad de Cantabria, 321-347.
- Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2019: *Nuestra misión universitaria* [online]. <https://www.comillas.edu/es/universidad-comillas-icai-icade/nuestra-universidad/declaracion-institucional> (accessed 30 May 2019).