



## Translation Learning Needs and Motivations within Blended Teaching at a Chinese Application-Oriented University

Yuxin Shan<sup>1, 2\*</sup> , Marilyn Fernandez Deocampo<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>College of Foreign Languages, Guangdong University of Science and Technology, Dongguan, Guangdong, China

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### Abstract

With the rapid development and popularization of information technology and online learning platforms, university teaching no longer needs to rely solely on traditional face-to-face instruction. This is particularly relevant for translation courses, which are both theoretically demanding and practically challenging. Blended teaching integrates online platforms with diverse learning materials to support flexible student learning. This enables students to learn anytime, anywhere, at a pace suited to their individual needs. Prior to designing such instruction and intervention, it is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' specific translation learning needs, including their bilingual competence in English and Chinese, as well as their academic and career aspirations. The present study, designed and conducted by the researcher, involved 96 junior English-major undergraduates from a Chinese Application-Oriented University. As an empirical investigation, it sought to identify the translation learning needs of students at application-oriented universities and to explore how blended teaching, informed by social constructivism approaches, influences learners' L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), particularly its three core dimensions: the ideal self, ought-to self and learning experience. Participants included two intact classes (EC and CC) selected via

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\*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: 347849875@qq.com

convenience sampling, EC demonstrated more pronounced improvement in translation proficiency. The research findings aim to provide both empirical evidence and theoretical insights for the enhancement of translation pedagogy in Chinese application-oriented universities, offering implications for improving translation curriculum design, aligning blended teaching with students' professional development, and strengthening sustained translation learning motivation.

**Keywords:** blended teaching, L2 motivational self-system, needs analysis,  
social constructivism

## Introduction

In China, general undergraduate universities can be broadly categorized into research-focused and application-oriented institutions. These two types of universities differ significantly in their educational cultivation objectives, curriculum design, students' learning foundation, and future academic or career planning. According to Zhang and Chen (2022), the curriculum in application-oriented universities is typically practice-focused, with limited humanities subjects. Apart from essential basic theories, the curriculum content is mostly practice-oriented, featuring detailed professional classifications and a tight teaching schedule. The emphasis is on training and enhancing students' independent learning and practical translation skills, this aligns well with the need for application-oriented universities to develop students who can effectively apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Within this framework, translation courses in schools of foreign languages at application-oriented universities are expected to cultivate practically skilled talents. However, most Chinese translation textbooks still emphasize literary translation. Many universities, whether academic or application-oriented, rely on similar textbooks, standardized courseware from publishers, and even identical teaching methods. Such uniformity overlooks institutional differences and weakens the alignment of translation teaching with the practical, industry-oriented goals of application-oriented universities.

With the rapid advancement of digital technologies and mobile tools, translation learning is now frequently supported by online platforms. When combined with traditional classroom instruction, this creates a blended learning model that integrates both online and offline components. By offering varied resources, instructional strategies, and media formats, blended teaching seeks to stimulate students' interest and motivation, fostering intrinsic drive that supports deeper, more sustained, and holistic learning. Translation competence encompasses fundamental linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar and cultural context. This

requires a tailored curriculum design approach at application-oriented universities. In line with these institutions' practical teaching approach, a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted prior to implementing the course.

The teaching intervention implemented in the EC maintained the same 16-week duration and 90-minute weekly schedule as the CC's traditional instruction. Blended translation teaching incorporated collaborative teaching and learning activities, real-world translation tasks and digital tools to encourage active knowledge construction. The aim of this design was to determine whether social constructivist pedagogy effectively enhances learners' engagement and pragmatic translation capabilities compared to conventional methods.

With the widespread use of intelligent devices such as tablets, smartphones, and computers, online learning resources have become increasingly accessible. In China, platforms such as Chaoxing Learning, Chinese University MOOC, and the Greater Bay Area Online Course Alliance provide strong support for blended teaching, often through mobile applications that allow students to learn anytime and anywhere. Such technological conditions not only create flexible, personalized learning environments that reduce students' resistance to online study, but also formed the basis for the blended teaching model adopted in the EC. By integrating these online resources with offline instruction, the study was able to address students' expressed learning needs while fostering greater motivation and engagement in translation learning.

Within blended translation teaching, social constructivism plays a crucial role. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning is viewed as a socially mediated process, where knowledge is constructed through interaction and guided participation. In this sense, the development of translation competence cannot be seen as an isolated cognitive activity; rather, it emerges through collaborative engagement, authentic tasks, and participation in meaningful contexts. While conventional face-to-face instruction can also encourage interaction and collaboration, blended translation teaching extends these affordances by integrating online platforms that allow continuous engagement beyond classroom time. Through digital resources, peer collaboration, and timely teacher feedback, students can revisit tasks, reflect, and receive support at their own pace. This extended and flexible learning environment amplifies the principles of social constructivism, making the acquisition of translation skills more sustainable and contextually meaningful.

The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), introduced by Dörnyei (2009), has emerged as a foundational framework in second language motivation research. This model comprises three interrelated constructs: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience. In the context of blended translation teaching, mapping students' motivational orientations across these dimensions is critical for aligning teaching strategies with social constructivist principles.

By systematically analyzing learners' aspirational goals, perceived societal demands, and real-time affective reactions to blended learning environments, educators can design interactive, collaborative tasks that harmonize students with collective knowledge-building. Such an approach not only addresses diverse motivational drivers but also scaffolds the development of translation competence through authentic, contextually grounded practices.

Although extensive research has explored second language motivation and translation pedagogy, the specific context of translation courses in application-oriented universities remains under-investigated. Furthermore, the implementation of blended learning models within these institutions has not received sufficient empirical attention, nor has the integration of social constructivist theory with the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in translation pedagogy. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the learning needs and motivational dynamics of translation students in application-oriented universities, with particular attention to the role of blended translation teaching in shaping their L2 motivational self-system. It provides empirical validation and theoretical frameworks to guide the development of effective translation pedagogy.

## Literature Review

### *1. Needs Analysis*

Needs analysis has long been recognized as a fundamental component in language teaching and curriculum design. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) defined it through three essential dimensions: necessities (what learners need to know to function effectively in the target situation), lacks (the gap between learners' current abilities and those necessities), and wants (the learners' own perceptions of what they wish to learn). In both academic and application-oriented universities, carrying out a systematic needs analysis before the beginning of a course is crucial. However, in practice, this step is often overlooked. At the author's institution (hereafter referred to as X University), instructors rarely conduct needs analysis prior to teaching, and the same teaching approach is typically applied across different classes. Translation courses are simultaneously offered to students majoring in translation, English, and business English, yet their learning needs differ significantly.

Understanding students' necessities allows teachers to design more targeted instructional content, select suitable materials, and arrange appropriate translation practice tasks. Identifying lacks makes it possible to apply pedagogical strategies such as scaffolding, derived from social constructivist theory, to provide support during both online and face-to-face learning activities. Exploring students' needs helps teachers understand their expectations of blended learning activities, their goals for the course, and how they hope the course will contribute to their future academic or professional development. While students' learning objectives focus on personal

growth, teachers' teaching objectives should aim to facilitate the achievement of those goals.

Conducting a needs assessment is critical for shaping effective foreign language education policies. Overlooking this process risks designing curricula that misalign with societal expectations or learners' actual requirements. As a result, needs analysis has become an essential prerequisite when developing language courses, as its findings enable educators to establish clear instructional objectives, design structured syllabi, and implement targeted teaching strategies aligned with specific learner needs (Ji, 2021).

## *2. Social Constructivism Theory and Blended Translation Teaching*

Social constructivism, initially developed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes that learning does not occur through passive reception of information but through active knowledge construction shaped by interaction and context. This perspective provides a strong foundation for translation pedagogy, where competence emerges from dynamic collaboration and authentic practice. Kiraly (2014) underscores that translation pedagogy must transition from traditional instructor-led models to contextualized project-based activities within authentic professional settings, positioning translation as a socially embedded practice. This orientation reflects the synergy between blended teaching frameworks and social constructivist principles, both of which prioritize learner agency in collaborative knowledge-building processes and align educational outcomes with real-world professional demands.

One essential dimension is collaborative learning and peer interaction. Translation students benefit when they engage in group projects, peer reviews, and cooperative tasks that allow them to exchange insights, negotiate meaning, and refine strategies. As Çavuşoğlu (2024) indicated, within a social constructivist framework, learners' progress is supported not only by teachers but also by peers, parents, and other external resources, which together provide a dynamic scaffolding system. Acting as facilitators rather than sole knowledge providers, teachers guide students to construct meaning through interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and the exchange of work in group settings. Such interaction enhances both cognitive development and professional readiness. Another crucial element is scaffolding. Teachers provide temporary, adaptive support that enables learners to complete tasks they could not manage alone. In translation classrooms, this might involve gradually increasing task complexity, offering targeted guidance, and providing feedback, which collectively foster greater autonomy and confidence in handling real-world translation challenges. Finally, social constructivism underscores the importance of hands-on, experiential learning. Translation competence is best developed through practical engagement with authentic materials and contexts. Activities such as internships, real translation projects, and the use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools provide learners with situated experiences that mirror

professional practice and reinforce theoretical knowledge.

### *3. L2 Motivational Self System Theory*

The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), proposed by Dörnyei (2009), provides a critical framework for analyzing motivation in translation learning through its three interconnected components. The ideal L2 self represents students' aspirations to become proficient language users capable of applying translation skills in future professional scenarios. For undergraduates at China's application-oriented universities, this often manifests as a vision of themselves working in fields such as international trade, tourism, or science and technology translation. At the university where the researcher has been teaching for over a decade, employment data consistently show that the majority of graduates remain in the local region and pursue careers in these pragmatic domains, underscoring the close alignment between students' aspirations and the university's talent development goals. The ought-to L2 self reflects external pressures, including societal demands for practical translation competence and career expectations, factors particularly important for students prioritizing career readiness over postgraduate study. The L2 learning experience captures learners' immediate reactions to classroom practices, tasks, and materials. Given that many students perceive translation courses as challenging and demotivating, strategic use of blended learning resources and interactive instructional methods can enhance their learning experiences, thereby cultivating stronger, more sustainable motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Building on this foundation, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) states how motivation is sustained through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In application-oriented contexts, students demonstrate heightened motivation when translation courses foster autonomy, build competence, and promote collaboration with peers and instructors. This aligns with Aksu's (2024) findings, which highlight that translation training gains motivational traction when instructional practices directly link to students' professional aspirations and provide meaningful opportunities for self-expression and growth.

## **Research Objectives**

Since this study mainly focuses on the translation learning needs of Chinese undergraduates and the motivational factors influencing their learning. The research objectives were put forward as follows:

1. To identify the specific academic and professional needs of Chinese undergraduate students in translation learning
2. To examine the influence of undergraduate students' perceptions of blended learning and social constructivism practices on their motivational dynamics

## Methodology

This study was conducted at X University in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, China, with the aim of investigating students' needs in translation courses at an application-oriented university, as well as examining the impact of blended teaching and social constructivist approaches on their learning motivation. A mixed-methods design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed.

### *1. Participants and Setting*

X University is a private, application-oriented university, with most students coming from Guangdong Province and very few from other regions. Compared with academic universities, private institutions have lower admission scores, which results in weaker English proficiency and greater challenges in learning translation. The researcher, who is also the author of this study, has taught translation courses at this university for thirteen years and is therefore familiar with the common difficulties students encounter when learning translation, as well as the pedagogical barriers that often hinder teaching effectiveness, this background provided a solid foundation for the present study.

Two intact classes participated in this study: one experimental class (EC) and one control class (CC), each with 48 students (6 males and 42 females). Participants were selected through convenience sampling without deliberate demographic balancing, and the researcher served as the instructor for both groups. The course lasted 16 weeks, with 90 minutes of classroom instruction per week. The EC engaged in blended translation teaching incorporating social constructivist principles, combining weekly offline sessions with flexible online learning. While no rigid requirements were set for online study to prevent resistance to additional workload, participation and frequency were monitored through the learning platform and factored into coursework assessment, encouraging sustained engagement. In contrast, the CC received traditional face-to-face teaching.

Before the course began, all 96 students completed a survey on their educational needs, skill deficiencies, and learning preferences. Findings from this survey guided the redesign of curriculum content and instructional methods, ensuring alignment with both the university's talent development goals and the specific objectives of the translation course, within the study's theoretical framework.

### *2. Data Collection*

To address the first research objective, a questionnaire was distributed to 96 students to gather information about their needs for translation courses. Three professors specializing in



translation pedagogy reviewed the questionnaire and evaluated it using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Items scoring 0.5 or higher were retained, while those below this threshold were revised or discarded. This validation process ensured the clarity and appropriateness of the instrument. The questionnaire focused on three main areas: (1) students' English proficiency and certification status; (2) their current translation ability and limiting factors; (3) their learning needs and preferred text types. Based on the results, a scope and sequence for translation instruction was developed. The instructional design for the EC incorporated blended learning components, while the CC followed traditional instruction, the teaching intervention was implemented over a 16-week period.

To address the second research objective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five EC students to capture their perceptions of blended learning and the use of social constructivist practices in translation courses, particularly in relation to their motivational self-concepts. To triangulate the data, the researcher also kept 16 teaching journals throughout the intervention, which recorded classroom dynamics in both EC and CC and tracked the quality and frequency of EC's online engagement. These supplementary records provided contextual evidence to better interpret how students' perceptions connected to changes in their L2 Motivational Self System.

### *3. Data Analysis*

The quantitative dataset was processed using SPSS statistical software, which facilitated comprehensive numerical analysis. Prior to computational processing, the initial datasets underwent rigorous data cleaning procedures to remove incomplete entries and irrelevant information. Through automated functions, the software produced summary metrics including frequency distributions and proportional representations, effectively visualizing the spread of student-reported requirements and demands.

The qualitative dataset, comprising interview transcripts and teaching journal entries, underwent systematic thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes. This analytical approach was supplemented by deductive coding procedures that utilized pre-established categories aligned with the study's theoretical framework and research questions. The mixed-methods design integrated classroom observations with student surveys. These methodologies enabled a rigorous examination of student responses and classroom behaviors. The analysis revealed how blended learning environments and social constructivist approaches shaped learners' motivational trajectories, providing actionable evidence for curriculum design.

The results of the needs questionnaire, together with the semi-structured interviews and the teaching journals, formed a process of triangulation, where qualitative and quantitative data



complemented and reinforced each other. This methodological synergy enabled the reciprocal validation of qualitative narratives and quantitative metrics, thereby strengthening the methodological robustness of the study. The cross-verification of multiple evidence sources addressed the two research objectives from varied analytical angles, ultimately generating a holistic and nuanced comprehension of both students' translation learning needs and their evolving learning motivational dynamics.

## Results

Regarding two objectives of this research, the findings were showed below:

### *1. Academic and Professional Needs of Translation Students*

**Table 1**

*Certification and Translation Experience by Groups*

Items	EC (%)	CC (%)
CET-4 Certification	85.42	72.92
CET-6 Certification	20.83	18.75
TEM-4 Certification	45.83	45.83
Awareness of CATTI Examination	43.75	22.92
CATTI Certification Achievement	0	0
Prior Course-Based Translation Experience	81.25	79.17

All 96 students from both the Experimental Class (EC) and the Control Class (CC) completed the needs analysis questionnaire.

Regarding English language certifications, both groups showed generally low attainment beyond basic qualifications. The majority of students had passed CET-4 (College English Test Band 4, a national intermediate-level exam), with a higher proportion in the EC (85.42%) than in the CC (72.92%). Fewer students in either group had achieved CET-6 (Band 6, a more advanced level) or TEM-4 (Test for English Majors, Band 4, specific to English majors), and no students had successfully obtained the CATTI (China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters), a professional-level certification known for its difficulty. In addition, both groups reported similar prior exposure to translation practice in other courses (around 80%). Overall, these findings highlight that while most students meet the minimum proficiency benchmark (CET-4), relatively few advance to higher-level or professional certifications, reflecting a gap between current competence and the demands of professional translation training.

**Table 2**

*Self-Evaluation of Translation Proficiency*

Evaluation	EC (%)	CC (%)
Very dissatisfied	8.33	20.83
Somewhat dissatisfied	35.42	45.83
Neutral	52.08	33.33
Somewhat satisfied	4.17	0
Very satisfied	0	0

The self-assessment results reveal a generally low level of confidence in translation abilities across both groups; dissatisfaction was more prevalent among CC students. Very few students expressed satisfaction with their skills, and none rated themselves as highly competent. These findings suggest that students lack self-efficacy in translation, which could discourage them from engaging deeply with translation tasks and reduce their persistence when faced with complex texts. For instructors, this highlights the difficulty of building students' confidence and competence within the time constraints of undergraduate courses, emphasizing the need for more effective and engaging teaching methods.

**Table 3**

*Key Factors Limiting Proficiency (Top 5 by Frequency)*

Factors	EC (%)	CC (%)
Limited vocabulary	89.58	95.83
Poor translation technique	85.42	81.25
Lack of cultural background knowledge	81.25	79.17
Weak grammar	72.92	77.08
Comprehension and organization skills	81.25	87.50

Both groups identified insufficient vocabulary as the most serious barrier, alongside difficulties in applying translation techniques, limited cultural knowledge, and weak text comprehension. Grammar weaknesses were also noted, while only a small number of students mentioned other obstacles. Overall, vocabulary, grammar, and cultural literacy emerged as the primary challenges to effective translation development. The significant proportion of students grappling with these foundational areas underscores that translation proficiency cannot be cultivated in isolation but requires a robust linguistic and cultural groundwork. Furthermore, the widespread challenges in implementing translation strategies and structuring coherent texts emphasize the necessity for structured guidance and active practice in these domains. For educators, this implies that translation pedagogy must combine comprehensive linguistic scaffolding, culturally immersive experiences, and technique-focused training to address

specific gaps and equip learners adequately for professional translation demands.

**Table 4**

*Learning Expectations in Translation Courses*

Item	EC (%)	CC (%)
Translation theories	58.33	43.75
Translation strategies	68.75	62.5
Translation methods	81.25	75
Translation techniques	87.5	89.58
Textual translation skills	79.17	70.83
Vocabulary mastery, grammar usage, and cultural background knowledge	75	85.42
Skills for doing the translation part of the TEM-8 exam	56.25	75

The survey revealed that students in both the EC and CC were interested in many aspects of translation learning. The highest demand was for practical skills, such as translation techniques and methods. Interest in theory was lower, but many students emphasized the need to strengthen linguistic and cultural foundations, as well as to develop strategies for exams such as the TEM-8. These findings suggest that students prioritize applied knowledge and skill-building, providing important guidance for designing translation instruction that aligns with their expectations and enhances motivation. After understanding the above situation, teaching can be more effectively designed around the types of translation knowledge that students wish to acquire. Aligning instruction with their specific expectations not only enhances engagement but also helps to stimulate and sustain their learning motivation.

**Table 5**

*Preferred Text Type in Translation Learning*

Items	EC (%)	CC (%)
Literary texts	14.58	17.67
Pragmatic texts	85.42	82.33
Science and technology	39.58	41.67
Foreign trade	54.17	85.42
Advertising	54.17	52.08
Tourist attractions	81.25	64.58
Political documents	37.5	22.92

The survey results revealed a clear preference in both the EC and CC for pragmatic translation materials, with particular emphasis on domains such as tourism, advertising, and foreign trade. In contrast, literary texts attracted little interest, while political and scientific materials received

only moderate attention. This pattern underscores a strong student preference for task-based translation over literary forms. The alignment with institutional goals to cultivate practice-focused graduates in application-oriented universities suggests that curricula should prioritize domains such as commerce, tourism, and advertising. By embedding these pragmatic resources within blended and socially constructivist approaches, instructors can address immediate learning demands while fostering long-term professional translation competencies.

## *2. Influence of Blended Learning and Social Constructivist Practices on L2MSS*

Thematic analysis revealed three theoretically grounded dimensions: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. These directly correspond to the three constructs specified in the introduction.

### *2.1 Ideal L2 Self*

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that students in the EC gradually developed clearer aspirations for their future as translators. By the eighth lesson, EC students began to articulate long-term goals, such as pursuing postgraduate studies, obtaining CATTI certification, or entering translation-related professions. These emerging aspirations illustrate how blended translation learning fostered a clearer professional self-concept and strengthened students' Ideal L2 Self. These accounts suggest that blended learning, by combining online resources and guided classroom activities, not only fostered motivation in the present but also encouraged students to envision themselves as future professionals in the field of translation.

Teaching Journal 4: By the fourth lesson, around one month into the course, classroom observations revealed that the EC students had become more proactive and confident. Some had reviewed online resources in advance, enabling them to answer complex questions in class. Progress in the CC was slower.

Teaching Journal 8: By the eighth lesson, EC students began to enquire about pursuing a Master's degree in translation, showing growing awareness of long-term professional trajectories.

Student 3: The online resources provided by the Chaoxing Learning Platform are highly comprehensive. I have gradually learned to search for academic materials independently, and I now aspire to become a translation instructor or pursue translation-related careers, whether full-time or part-time. At the very least, I have finally found my motivation to learn.

Student 5: I intend to pursue CATTI certification and seek translation-related careers. I want to have guidance from teacher on selecting target universities for translation postgraduate studies.

## 2.2 Ought-to L2 Self

Classroom observations and interviews indicated that EC students' motivation was also shaped by external expectations and requirements. From the outset, they were informed that engagement with online resources would be monitored and incorporated into assessment, reinforcing a sense of accountability. Regular reminders in class emphasized the importance of timely completion, making students aware that meeting these obligations was part of their academic responsibility.

Teaching Journal 1: *At the beginning of the course, EC students were explicitly required to engage with online resources, which would contribute to their assessment and final grades.*

Teaching Journal 10: *Students with low completion rates were reminded in class, reinforcing accountability.*

Student 2: *I appreciate the supplementary videos provided for each lesson. They allow me to review what I did not fully grasp during class.*

Student 3: *I value the extended knowledge sections in online resources, which improve my translation skills beyond the tasks set.*

Student 5: *Online learning has cultivated my learning autonomy. I try to resolve problems online before consulting the teacher.*

## 2.3 L2 Learning Experience

Students in the EC reported that blended instruction significantly improved their overall learning experience. The combination of flexible online resources and interactive in-class activities reduced learning anxiety and encouraged active participation. The Chaoxing platform provided opportunities for preview and review at students' own pace, while face-to-face sessions applied social constructivist principles that emphasized collaboration, feedback, and student-centered engagement. Together, these elements fostered confidence, motivation, and a more supportive classroom environment.

Teaching Journal 4: *By the fourth lesson, EC students became more proactive and confident, sometimes preparing with online resources in advance.*

Teaching Journal 5: *In blended instruction, the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered activities fostered collaboration and engagement.*

Student 2: *I appreciate the flexible, low-pressure online resources. They are equally useful for previewing and reviewing. Revisiting them before exams was particularly helpful.*

Student 4: *As an introverted person, I initially lacked confidence, but the instructor's positive feedback on my online assignments motivated me. I now feel comfortable asking questions via the platform and receiving prompt responses.*

Student 5: *I enjoy the in-class translation exercises and the immediate feedback. The instructor*

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*compares multiple student answers, never criticizes incorrect responses, and always highlights strengths. This makes me look forward to the weekly sessions.*

## **Discussion**

### *1. Academic and Professional Needs of Translation Students*

A needs analysis questionnaire was conducted at a private, application-oriented university to investigate students' requirements for translation courses. The questionnaire focused on students' existing bilingual proficiency, the factors that constrain their translation performance, their expectations of the course, and their preferred text types. At the School of Foreign Languages in X University, students' limited language foundation is reflected in the low pass rates for the Test for English Majors (TEM-4 and TEM-8) in 2024. Specifically, the pass rate for the TEM-4 test was only 34.27%, and for the TEM-8 test it was just 10.25%. Both of these figures are considerably lower than the national averages of 52.75% and 40.47%, respectively. These results highlight weaknesses in vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills, all of which are closely tied to translation competence.

Previous studies have emphasized that a strong grasp of vocabulary and grammar can significantly improve translation performance. Students with a wider vocabulary are better able to select contextually appropriate equivalents, avoid literal or awkward translations, and accurately convey subtle meanings between languages. Proficiency in grammar, on the other hand, ensures that sentences are coherent, structurally accurate and stylistically appropriate in the target language. While both aspects are indispensable, research has shown that vocabulary tends to play a more decisive role than grammar. Inadequate lexical knowledge often forces students into literal translations or imprecise word choices, which compromise overall accuracy and readability (Ula, 2021). This highlights the need for translation pedagogy to reinforce lexical development while also consolidating grammatical competence. Therefore, establishing a robust foundation during the initial two years of undergraduate study is paramount in language education. Additionally, attention should be given to developing students' native language abilities. Encouraging students to read newspapers, magazines, and other authentic materials can improve their expressive skills since translation competence is shaped by the combined strength of source and target language proficiency and second language ability.

The majority of students in both EC and CC expressed a preference for pragmatic translation over literary translation. This preference aligns with the fact that graduates from application-oriented universities rarely find employment in fields related to literary or political document translation. Nevertheless, some private universities continue to devote a significant portion of their curriculum to political or literary translation, which runs counter to the cultivation objectives. Since literary and political translation require an exceptionally high level of

bilingual competence, students at private institutions, who typically have lower university entrance exam scores, are often not suited to this type of training. For the small number of students with a strong interest in these areas, self-study beyond regular coursework may be a more appropriate option.

It is also important to recognize that even within pragmatic translation, not all text types equally serve the employment needs of students. For instance, political texts are sometimes categorized as “pragmatic,” but instructors still need to carefully assess their relevance to the local job market. As Martinez (2011) points out, teaching translation through authentic materials designed for real-world communication rather than exclusive classroom use more accurately mirrors the linguistic challenges students encounter in professional contexts. Similarly, Natsir (2021) emphasizes that the use of authentic materials in translation courses provides learners with practical experience and enhances their readiness for employment in translation-related fields.

A deep understanding of application-oriented universities’ teaching objectives and their role in serving regional economies can guide the design of curricula that better prepare students for the workplace. For instance, X University is located in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, a city where foreign trade, garment manufacturing, and electronics production are dominant industries. The majority of graduates, whose hometowns and the university itself are located within the Pearl River Delta region, continue to work in this area instead of pursuing career in other regions. Thus, translation courses should integrate materials that connect directly with these industries, helping students develop market-oriented skills.

## *2. Blended Learning, Social Constructivism, and Their Impact on L2MSS*

Findings from this study further demonstrate that students expressed strong preference of blended translation teaching and the integration of social constructivist principles into classroom practice. Students from experimental class particularly highlighted that their autonomy and opportunities for peer collaboration heightened both interest and persistence in translation learning. Social constructivist approaches emphasize learning as an active, collaborative process in which knowledge is co-constructed rather than passively received. As Moustafa et al. (2013) emphasize, teachers should encourage and accept student autonomy, creating a comfortable atmosphere for expression and functioning as facilitators rather than as the sole providers of knowledge. Social constructivist frameworks redefine educators as collaborators who empower learners to develop agency, moving away from authoritarian roles characterized by enforcement and control (Gutstein, 2007). When applied in translation pedagogy, these approaches create a supportive environment where students can share ideas, learn from mistakes, and negotiate meaning together.



Social constructivist strategies, such as providing timely and encouraging feedback, setting appropriately challenging tasks and implementing competitive bonus-point systems, all contribute to fostering long-term motivation. These methods resonate with recent scholarship, which underscores that constructivist tasks situated within blended learning environments strengthen students' engagement and self-regulation by making them active participants in their own progress (Hosen et al., 2025). These findings reaffirm the earlier discussion of blended translation pedagogy: the integration of online resources with face-to-face instruction not only supports authentic translation practice but also ensures that students receive structured guidance from educators.

The emphasis on autonomy and peer collaboration is particularly effective in reducing anxiety associated with translation tasks, as students feel supported by both instructors and peers. For example, group discussions and teachers' encouragement enable learners to experiment with translation strategies in low-risk environments, fostering confidence and creativity. Overall, the successful implementation of social constructivist frameworks in blended translation teaching underscores the importance of designing pedagogical practices that balance individual agency with collective learning.

## Conclusion

Translation pedagogy is one of the most critical and complex components of language education. Effective instruction requires educators to recognize the importance of thorough preparation. This includes understanding the type of institution and its talent development goals, clarifying the role of the translation course within these broader educational aims, and identifying the course's overall teaching goals, as well as the specific focus and challenges of each session. Having conducted student needs analyses, instructors should then design distinct teaching approaches for different classes, rather than enforcing uniformity across all groups.

Shifting from teacher-led instruction to student-centered approaches does not reduce teachers' responsibilities; rather, it transforms them into roles of facilitation and scaffolding. Instead of focusing primarily on delivering content, instructors are required to design structured yet flexible learning tasks, monitor progress, and provide targeted feedback that supports learners at different stages of development. This shift contrasts with traditional models, where the teacher's authority was primarily expressed through one-way transmission of knowledge. In student-centered contexts, effective pedagogy depends on the instructor's ability to create learning environments that balance support with autonomy, ensuring that students remain both guided and challenged throughout the process.

## Recommendations

### *1. Recommendations for Translation Instruction*

Needs analysis is a vital preliminary stage in developing a syllabus or curriculum, ensuring that the materials used are practical and aligned with students' real learning requirements. From a teaching management perspective, universities or colleges should require instructors to conduct a needs analysis prior to delivering their courses. Without this requirement, some teachers may neglect this crucial step. Each instructor can design a needs questionnaire tailored to factors such as course difficulty, their own teaching experience and the intended learning outcomes. This enables more effective instructional design. As Syarnubi et al. (2023) emphasize, curriculum preparation in any discipline should be grounded in a systematic analysis of learners' needs; translation courses are no exception.

Research indicates that well-designed pedagogical strategies can effectively activate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among learners. Blended translation teaching model, for instance, align with students' personal academic goals and reinforce family- and career-related expectations. This leads to significant improvements in the three core components of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS): the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience. These frameworks demonstrate how instructional approaches that connect theoretical knowledge with real-world relevance can encourage sustained engagement.

Tsai et al. (2023) demonstrated that integrating design thinking into constructivist teaching significantly enhanced students' motivation and their capacity to address complex challenges. In such settings, learners were encouraged to connect classroom knowledge with real-world contexts through collaboration, reflection, and purposeful problem-solving. These practices not only fostered deeper cognitive engagement but also cultivated autonomy and the ability to approach issues from multiple perspectives, both powerful drivers of sustained motivation. By emphasizing student-centered and constructivist instruction, educators can promote both skill development and motivational growth, thereby supporting learners in achieving long-term goals in language learning and translation proficiency.

### *2. Recommendations for Further Studies*

In this study, the instructor maintained a teaching journal weekly, while the needs analysis for the EC and CC classes was conducted prior to the start of the semester. Semi-structured interviews with five students from the EC class were conducted towards the end of the sixteen-week course. However, curriculum design should not be viewed as a fixed or linear process, instead, it is cyclical and dynamic, incorporating curriculum planning, implementation, adjustment and evaluation. This approach enables teachers and students to identify emerging

needs and provides valuable opportunities for reflection and feedback. For future research, process-oriented interviews could be conducted periodically, for example once or twice per month, alongside mid-semester needs analyses or feedback collection. This would enable instructors to adapt their teaching strategies more responsively and ensure that classroom observations remain highly targeted. As Ji (2021) points out, an ongoing needs analysis is essential for addressing students' evolving learning requirements while supporting established instructional goals.

It is also important to acknowledge the contextual specificity of the present study. Participants were recruited from a single university within a single academic discipline, and translation tasks were limited to the English–Chinese language pair. While this focused design supports internal consistency, it may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research would benefit from a more diverse participant pool and linguistic scope. Incorporating learners from multiple disciplines, geographic regions (e.g. different provinces or cultural contexts) and institutional types (e.g. comprehensive universities and application-oriented colleges) could reveal how institutional and disciplinary backgrounds influence the effectiveness of blended and constructivist learning models. Furthermore, extending the analysis to additional language pairs (such as Japanese–Chinese, Thai–Chinese or Arabic–Chinese) would enable cross-linguistic comparisons to be made and help to establish whether the observed patterns are language-specific or more universally applicable. Such expanded investigations would not only test the generalizability of the current results but also contribute to the development of more inclusive and context-sensitive pedagogical frameworks. By examining translation learning across varied educational and linguistic ecosystems, researchers can uncover new empirical patterns and refine theoretical understandings of motivation, collaboration, and skill acquisition in blended learning environments. Expanding the research scope in this direction will ultimately strengthen the flexibility and robustness of blended learning and social constructivist approaches, ensuring their continued value in a rapidly globalizing landscape of translation education.

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