Translation Learning Beliefs and Learning Strategies of Chinese English Majors

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Abstract: *This study aimed to investigate Chinese English major students' beliefs about translation learning and learning strategies in tertiary translation classrooms in China. Differences of translation learning beliefs and learning strategies based on participant profiles were explored. In addition, it attempted to investigate the relationship between learning beliefs and learning strategies. Participants in the present study included a total of 305 under graduate students. Specifically, the sample was composed of 155 third-year English majors and 150 fourth-year English majors in China. A questionnaire was designed and administered to all subjects. The questionnaire consisted of the following two instruments: 1) Beliefs about Translation Learning Survey (BATLS), which was developed on the basis of Schäffner (2004) [1]; 2) Strategies Inventory for Translation Learning (SITL) adapted from Han (2015) [2]. The findings indicated that English majors held a moderate level of translation learning beliefs. Great differences were identified regarding translation learning beliefs. Male have a better recognition on beliefs about translation principles than female. Seniors and proficient learners have a higher level of beliefs concerning motivation and expectations. In addition, students applied various strategies in translation learning process but with a medium frequency. Juniors and seniors differed considerably in their application of compensation strategies. Further, significant correlation were observed in translation learning beliefs and translation learning strategies. The more positive beliefs students held, the more frequent strategies applied in translation. The present study enriched the research on translation learning beliefs and translation learning strategies. These findings held important implications for translation teaching and learning in China.*

Keywords: *Translation Learning Beliefs, Translation Learning Strategies, Translation Competence and Chinese English Major Students*

1. Introduction

As the world becomes more interconnected, the need for experienced translators and interpreters grows. Translation learning is an essential component of foreign language acquisition, and translation competence is recognized as a higher-level language aptitude among English majors. Translation is critical in language acquisition and can have a substantial impact on students' language ability and intercultural competency.

With developments in foreign language teaching, the teacher-centred approach has begun to give way to the student-centred approach in translation teaching. Educators have advocated for student-centered instruction and strengthened that teachers should pay more attention to learner individual differences. As language learners are important participants in the process of translation learning, their differences have always been the study emphasis of the translation instruction researchers. Among these individual differences, learning beliefs and learning strategies are important learner factors that may determine the success or failure of the translation learning.

Learning beliefs attempt to look into the belief systems of translation learners. Understanding learners' beliefs about translation enables translation teachers and trainers to get a glimpse of the translation learning process and to be aware of the learners' attitudes, preferences, and challenges so they can tailor the translation programs to the learners' needs, help them develop translation strategies, and achieve satisfactory teaching results. BATLS serves as a useful tool for researchers to analyse issues arising in the translation learning process, develop translation teaching models and philosophy accordingly, and design appropriate learning activities for translation learners at different levels.

Translation learning strategies are techniques and approaches used by learners to enhance their

translation skills and overcome the challenges inherent in the process. Effective translation learning strategies are essential for developing translation competence among language learners. Krings (2001) [3] highlights that learners who adopt conscious and strategic approaches to translation are more likely to produce accurate and culturally appropriate translations. SITL serves as a useful tool to explore the general concepts and particular methods that students employ to learn translation. Understanding the strategies employed by learners can lead to the development of effective pedagogical approaches that enhance translation competence, language proficiency, intercultural communication skills, and learner autonomy.

Learning beliefs shape the selection and use of language learning strategies. Individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to employ effective strategies, leading to enhanced language learning outcomes (Tseng et al., 2006)[4]. Both translation learning beliefs about translation learning strategies have a significant impact on English major students' translation proficiency development and intercultural competence. Although lots of research have been done on language learning beliefs and learning strategies, not much work has been done on translation learning. Compared with language learning studies, research on translation learning are far fewer, especially on translation learning beliefs and translation learning strategies. The significance of this study may lie ultimately in its contribution to a better understanding of students' translation learning activities to English teachers and learners themselves in translation classroom. Besides, the conclusion of the study has enlightenment not only for the English major students, but also for translation teaching. Further, this research will enrich the studies in the field of translation learning and also provide reference for future research.

2. Research and Discussion

2.1. Research Design

In this study, descriptive research was employed to describe and analyze the levels of learning beliefs and strategies use of the respondents. In addition, questionnaire surveys were used to acquire information by the self-rated questionnaires in terms of translation learning beliefs and learning strategies. Moreover, correlational research was used in this study to discover and then measure the relationship between translation learning beliefs and strategy use.

2.2. Participants

The subjects for this study are participants consisting of 305 junior and senior English Major students from four universities situated in northeast China. Most English majors begin to take their translation courses in the third year and most of them have passed TEM-4, a standardized English achievement test for English majors in China, which tests English majors' language ability in English listening, reading, and writing. Translation course was offered during the third and fourth year at college in China to improve students' English translation proficiency, with a focus on translation theory and practice. Junior and senior students were selected because they received sufficient translation instructions and practice.

The present study was conducted at four public universities in China, with a total number of 1460 English major students. The population of the students for each university was 390, 360, 358, and 352. Using the Raosoft online sample size calculator, the recommended sample size was a total of 305, with a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and 50% response distribution. There were a total of 305 juniors and seniors investigated and they submitted their data through an online survey published on Questionnaire Star online platform.

2.3. Instrument

Two research instruments were employed in this study, which was the Beliefs About Translation Learning Survey (BTLS) and the Strategies Inventory for Translation Learning (SITL). Four Likert scale was used to describe the respondents' perception of their translation learning beliefs, learning strategies, and translation competence.

The survey questionnaire contained three parts. The first part concerned learners' backgrounds, providing information about their sex, academic levels, and English proficiency levels. Beliefs About Translation Learning Survey, which assesses the level of learners' beliefs in translation learning, was the second part of the survey. It was designed by Schäffner (2004)[1] to investigate learners' beliefs

about translation learning. The researcher considered and modified particular questions and verbal interpretations related to the learner's characteristics in translation learning. The third part was to measure their usage of translation learning strategies by the Strategies Inventory for Translation Learning which is mainly based on the questionnaire used by Han (2015)[2]. It was adopted and revised to collect data regarding students' use of translation learning strategies.

2.4. Data Analysis

In response to the research questions, quantitative data that came from the three questionnaires were analyzed in SPSS. In the interpretation of the profile of the respondents, frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the profile of the English major students about sex, academic year level, and English proficiency level. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to identify the level of translation learning beliefs, translation learning strategies, and translation competence among the respondents. Moreover, the independent t-test was employed to investigate the difference when grouped by the profile. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the significant correlation between translation learning beliefs and learning strategies.

2.5 Results ans Discussion

Table 1: Difference of Responses on Translation Learning Beliefs When Grouped According to Profile

Sex	$\lambda 2c$ / U	p-value	Interpretation
Learning Beliefs About Language Training	3287.5	0.607	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Knowledge And Techniques	3377	0.766	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Learning Difficulties	3418	0.845	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Expectations/Motivations	3458.5	0.921	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Principles	2413.5	0.010	Significant
Academic Level			
Learning Beliefs About Language Training	1.966	0.374	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Knowledge And Techniques	3.711	0.156	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Learning Difficulties	1.954	0.377	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Expectations and Motivation	6.556	0.038	Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Principles	2.517	0.284	Not Significant
English Proficiency Level			
Learning Beliefs About Language Training	4.887	0.180	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Knowledge And Techniques	6.119	0.106	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Learning Difficulties	3.188	0.364	Not Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Expectations/Motivation	11.827	0.008	Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Principles	0.409	0.938	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 1 shows a comparison of responses on translation learning beliefs when grouped according to profile.

First, the computed p-value of 0.010 was less than the 0.05 alpha threshold, indicating that there was a significant difference in Learners' Beliefs About Translation Principles when grouped by sex. This means that the responses differ statistically, and the test results show that males have a superior assessment than females. Male standard deviations are higher than female standard deviations, indicating that females' beliefs were more homogeneous than males'. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Bernat and Lloyd's (2007)[5] study. According to their findings, males and females generally held comparable ideas regarding language learning, with only one item being statistically significant and another being marginally significant.

The difference in learner beliefs caused by gender may be related to the difference in the learning ability of male and female students. Female students are better at memory and language, while boys are better at spatial thinking and manual operation. While translation learning focuses on theory and practice, female students pay more attention to practical operation and manual ability. In brief, students of different genders have differences in learning beliefs. When planning teaching activities, teachers should take into account the varied learning styles and personalities of male and female learners.

Stratified and targeted activities are more likely to improve students' positive beliefs and inhibit their negative beliefs.

Second, there was a significant difference in learners' Beliefs About Expectations/Motivation when grouped according to academic level. This means that the responses differ significantly and based on the pairwise comparison, it was also found out that seniors have better evaluation than juniors. The possible reason is that seniors may participate in a variety of class-based assignments and activities with different classmates, they may have higher expectations about their class activities. In addition, the difference between the two groups could be attributed to teachers' roles in the translation classroom, as it has been discovered that teachers play an important role in promoting student engagement through motivating and collaborative activities that are compatible with students' needs. Uztosun (2020)[6] endorsed that more motivated students actively participate in learning tasks and activities than less motivated students, which improves their language learning.

The findings demonstrated that students' academic level had a marginally significant effect on their translation learning views, implying that students' belief levels did not differ considerably at both levels. This study confirms prior research findings that motivation and expectation perceptions do not alter based on students' educational level. Students' lack of formal prior knowledge of motivational learning principles could explain such a finding. In other words, students at both academic levels did not receive any training that could have helped them develop translation learning beliefs. Such a problem necessitates university motivational belief training on translation, as well as the importance of teacher involvement in fostering students' understanding of their motivational tendencies to improve their learning.

Finally, there was a significant difference in learners' Beliefs About Expectations/Motivation when grouped according to English proficiency level. This suggests that the responses differ significantly, and a pairwise comparison revealed that learners with fair proficiency are rated higher. Studies indicate that learners at intermediate proficiency levels demonstrate a shift in beliefs, with increased confidence and motivation than those at lower proficiency levels. They begin to develop higher expectations and perceive language learning as a valuable skill. These learners are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, seeking personal growth and communication opportunities.

Gender, academic achievement, and language ability all had a minor but significant effect on learner perceptions regarding translation learning, according to the findings, they still have important implications for translation educators, as they emphasize the need for differentiated instructional strategies and support mechanisms that align with learners' gender, academic levels, and proficiency levels. By understanding and addressing learners' beliefs, educators can foster a positive learning environment that promotes motivation, engagement, and language proficiency development.

Table 2 shows a comparison of responses on translation learning strategies when grouped according to profile.

To begin with, the results show that there is no significant difference in gender across all five dimensions because all estimated p-values were more than 0.05. This means no clear difference was noticed, implying that gender-based differences don't influence learners' selection and use of specific translation learning strategies. Similarly in Abu Shmais (2004)'s [7] study, no significant differences were found in terms of the gender variable. However, gender-based differences may reflect varying communication styles and learning preferences. Gender bias in learning materials might affect learners' strategy selection. It is essential for translation teachers and curriculum designers to be aware of these potential gender-related differences and consider them when developing effective translation training programs to cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of all learners.

Second, as shown in the table, there is a statistically significant difference in compensation strategies when classified by academic level, because the computed p-values are smaller than the alpha level of 0.05. This signifies that the responses differ significantly from the test, indicating that seniors have higher assessments than juniors. Previous research indicated a statistically significant variation in the adoption of specific types of learning strategies across academic levels (Göpferich & Riitta, 2009; Pym, 2010)[8]. The translator's own language proficiency, subject knowledge, and experience play a vital role in determining the extent to which compensation strategies are employed (Beeby et al., 2009)[9]. Senior students display increased autonomy and are more likely to question traditional translation norms and experiment with alternative translation strategies. As they engage in self-assessment and metacognitive practices to refine their translation skills, senior translation learners are better at reflective learning in advanced academic years.

Table 2: Difference of Responses on Translation Learning Strategies When Grouped According to Profile

Sex	λ2c / U	p-value	Interpretation
Memory Strategies	3255.5	0.557	Not Significant
Cognitive Strategies	3356.5	0.731	Not Significant
Compensation Strategies	3371.5	0.758	Not Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	3076.5	0.309	Not Significant
Affective Strategies	3033	0.258	Not Significant
Academic Level			
Memory Strategies	3.024	0.221	Not Significant
Cognitive Strategies	4.659	0.097	Not Significant
Compensation Strategies	10.569	0.005	Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	4.841	0.089	Not Significant
Affective Strategies	5.194	0.075	Not Significant
English Proficiency Level			
Memory Strategies	1.023	0.796	Not Significant
Cognitive Strategies	1.733	0.630	Not Significant
Compensation Strategies	2.999	0.392	Not Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	3.439	0.329	Not Significant
Affective Strategies	1.45	0.694	Not Significant

Table 3: Relationship between Translation Learning Beliefs and Translation Learning Strategies

Learner Beliefs About Language Training	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Memory Strategies	.400**	<.001	Highly Significant
Cognitive Strategies	.256**	<.001	Highly Significant
Compensation Strategies	.216**	<.001	Highly Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.261**	<.001	Highly Significant
Affective Strategies	.309**	<.001	Highly Significant
Social Strategies	.190**	<.001	Highly Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Knowledge And Techniques			
Memory Strategies	.430**	<.001	Highly Significant
Cognitive Strategies	.305**	<.001	Highly Significant
Compensation Strategies	.286**	<.001	Highly Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.340**	<.001	Highly Significant
Affective Strategies	.340**	<.001	Highly Significant
Social Strategies	.222**	<.001	Highly Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Learning Difficulties			
Memory Strategies	.417**	<.001	Highly Significant
Cognitive Strategies	.253**	<.001	Highly Significant
Compensation Strategies	.263**	<.001	Highly Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.297**	<.001	Highly Significant
Affective Strategies	.281**	<.001	Highly Significant
Social Strategies	.198**	<.001	Highly Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Expectations/Motivation			
Memory Strategies	.525**	<.001	Highly Significant
Cognitive Strategies	.399**	<.001	Highly Significant
Compensation Strategies	.357**	<.001	Highly Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.380**	<.001	Highly Significant
Affective Strategies	.393**	<.001	Highly Significant
Social Strategies	.284**	<.001	Highly Significant
Learners' Beliefs About Translation Principles			
Memory Strategies	.445**	<.001	Highly Significant
Cognitive Strategies	.390**	<.001	Highly Significant
Compensation Strategies	.375**	<.001	Highly Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.390**	<.001	Highly Significant
Affective Strategies	.415**	<.001	Highly Significant
Social Strategies	.311**	<.001	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Finally, when grouped by English proficiency level, similar responses on translation learning strategies are shown in the table. Because all of the estimated p-values were more than 0.05, there was

no statistically significant difference. This indicates that the gender or the English proficiency level of the participants don't have a significant impact on the use of translation learning strategies. There are many studies which have resulted in different findings from the aforementioned studies (e.g. Magogwe & Oliver, 2007)[10]. One possible explanation for the different findings found in the studies mentioned above and many others might be related to the context of learning situation, which could have a strong influence on learners" choice of language learning strategies.

However, it's worth mentioning that even though the differences aren't statistically significant, there could still be variations among individuals. Apart from gender, academic level, and English proficiency level, there are other factors that might influence the selection and utilization of translation learning strategies. In addition, the learning environment and instructional methods employed in translation classes or courses can also shape and impact students' adoption of specific learning strategies.

Table 3 indicates the relationship between translation learning beliefs and learning strategies based on different dimensions. It can be seen from this table that based on the computed rho values of all the five dimensions, students' translation learning beliefs were closely correlated with each strategy categories. The stronger beliefs students held, the more frequent their learning strategies were employed.

Translation learning beliefs and translation learning strategies have a dynamic and reciprocal interaction. According to Li and Zhang, learners with strong positive beliefs were more likely to adopt effective learning strategies, leading to improved translation outcomes. Learners' beliefs shape their strategic choices, but at the same time, experiences with different strategies can reshape their beliefs and expectations. This interplay suggests the need for an integrated approach to translation pedagogy that considers both beliefs and strategies to foster effective learning environments. There is now considerable support for the cyclical links between learners' beliefs and strategy use.

3. Conclusion

The outcomes of this study were in line with the general conclusions of earlier research on language learning strategies. Similar to earlier studies, this study discovered that the more favorable language learning beliefs the students held, the more frequent strategies they reported utilizing.

Some practical implication and recommendation for translation classroom practice will be given as follow.

1) Fostering students' positive translation learning beliefs.

2) Conducting Strategy Training Program in translation Classroom

3) Implementing Learning Beliefs and Learning Strategies within the Translation Teaching Curriculum.

4) Fostering positive and supportive relationships with all students, promoting collaborative learning, and ensuring equitable opportunities for participation and success.

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