

# Motivational Profiles of Chinese Undergraduate English Majors in Translation Learning — A Mix-Methods Approach

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**Abstract**—Motivation is regarded as a key factor influencing students' learning performance. In translation teaching research, motivation, one of students' key learning variables, remains an important domain to be further explored. This study aims to inquire into the types of Chinese English majors' motivation in translation learning and account for their motivational profiles. 34 third-year English majors participated in this study. They were administered to a motivation test using a revised Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (short for AMTB). The results show that: 1) overall, motivations in translation learning among English majors were moderately strong; 2) instrumental motivations were statistically higher than valuational motivations in translation learning among English majors. Subsequent interviews with the students reveal reasons behind the uneven levels of motivations, including institute-related, administrative-related and self-related factors. Some measures are suggested to help boost students' motivation, especially valuational ones in translation learning. Findings from this study may have pedagogical implications for translation teaching research in the Chinese context.

**Index Terms**—motivation, demotivation, translation, Chinese English majors, AMTB

## I. INTRODUCTION

Translation teaching plays a pivotal role in cultivating qualified foreign language talents for cross-cultural communication in various fields, and it creates an important domain for translation research. In the Chinese context, translation teaching for English language learners at undergraduate level mainly targets two groups of students: English majors and translation majors. For the former, translation has been taught as a compulsory core course under the title of translation theory and practice in schools of foreign languages and literature in colleges and universities for conferring a bachelor degree in arts (BA) since April, 1979 when the Ministry of Education issued the Syllabus for English Majors at the Foundational Stage; for the latter, translation has been taught as a professional skill for educating professional translators and interpreters in a systematic framework for conferring a bachelor degree of translation and interpreting (BTI) since the program was first established in 2006 (Tao et al., 2020). The current study focuses on the first type of students because on the one hand, it has a much longer history, and on the other, more than 1,300 institutes of higher education in China offer BA program for English majors, with over 67,000 graduates in 2023 according to data released by the National Advisory Committee for Foreign Language Teaching (NACFLT) on behalf of the Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education, P.R. China. In comparison, only 230 colleges and universities have been authorized to set up BTI program since 2006 (Tao, 2016). In other words, English major education has now become China's largest undergraduate discipline (Li & Hu, 2021).

China's National Criteria of Teaching Quality for BA Programs in English specifies talent cultivation objectives for English majors, highlighting the need to cultivate English majors' comprehensive English language skills, enrich their cultural knowledge, improve their cross-cultural communication competence, inspire their creativity and practical abilities, and foster their logical and independent thinking capabilities (Li & Hu, 2021). In other words, English majors should become English language professionals who can adapt to the needs of national economic construction and social development (Wang & Zhong, 2017), shifting from educating talents good at English literature to competent cross-cultural communicators or interdisciplinary talents.

In this regard, national English proficiency tests like Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM 4) for sophomores and Test for English Majors Band 8 (TEM 8) for senior English majors have been implemented since they came into being in the early 1990s (Li & Hu, 2021). Translation, an important indicator of students' English proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills, is tested in TEM 8, accounting for 15 points out of a full score of 100 (Xu & Liu, 2018). Over the years, however, students' performance in the translation section has been mediocre. The two latest TEM 8 tests show that nationwide, the average scores for Grade 2022 and Grade 2023 stood at 8.47 points and 8.68 points, respectively, both falling short of the 9-point passing line.

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Many scholars in translation teaching research have noticed this issue and tried to account for students' under-performance in translation from different perspectives. For instance, Zhu (2016) believed there are many problems facing translation teaching for English majors in China, such as the course' over-emphasis on translation theories and skills rather than real practice and its focus on literature translation instead of other practical texts, all of which dampen students' interest in translation learning. Wang and He (2019) also voiced concern with regard to the traditional way of teaching as it focuses more on imparting basic knowledge of translation, translation techniques, and texts that have little to do with what the market needs. Sun (2021) regarded huge linguistic differences between Chinese and English languages and outdated grammar-based teaching methods as the main reasons for students' poor translation performance. In response to this, reform of translation teaching in various aspects has been conducted over the past decades, such as reforming the curriculum to highlight more on practical training rather than theoretical lecturing, as well as the market needs instead of what the teachers regard as important (Li, 2002), proposing practical techniques such as employing connotation nouns, varying sentence patterns, and using more cohesive devices like substitution, ellipsis and linkage words, etc. (Zhang et al., 2013), adopting new teaching methods or models like task-based teaching module and project-based teaching model (Li et al., 2015) based on social constructivist approach to translation training and translation workshop (Wang & He, 2019), or computer aided tools in teaching translation (Yao, 2017), etc.

From these studies, it can be noticed that two major problems stand out in translation teaching research in the Chinese context (Wu, 2013). One is the neglect of its main stakeholder – the learners themselves. Much of the research so far has been about external factors influencing students' translation performance, such as text books or other teaching materials, and teaching methods, despite the fact that numerous new text books have been compiled and new teaching approaches proposed and implemented. Therefore, it is important to switch the focus from external factors to internal ones impacting the learners themselves. The other is the lack of empirical research in this domain as conclusions drawn from the research are mostly based on teachers' personal teaching experience in want of further statistical corroboration (Li et al., 2015; Yuan, 2018; Zhang et al., 2013).

In translation learning, students' performance varies a lot even when the same text books and teaching methods are used by the same teacher. This may be due to various learners' factors influencing students themselves, including their translation learning concepts (Wu, 2013), learning strategies (Zhang et al., 2013), and motivation to learn. And it is believed that more research into internal factors influencing translation learners needs to be carried out.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Studies on Students' Motivation to Learn English*

Interest in factors affecting learners' performance originates from second / foreign language acquisition research. These factors include age, language transfer, learning environment, motivation, linguistic input and output, interaction, cognitive development, etc. (Ellis, 2013). Among these factors, motivation is regarded as the most influential factor shaping one's learning concept and strategies in learning. Motivation is believed to propel one to take up learning in second / foreign language acquisition, and sustain the long and arduous learning process. In other words, motivation is the prerequisite for effective learning to take place. It influences learning outcome and vice versa. It is also the interface where teaching and learning interact with each other (Keller, 2010).

Therefore, research on learners' motivation or motivational profile will enable teachers to gain insight into the diverse factors affecting their learning efficacy. For instance, Taguchi et al. (2009) compared English learners' motivation profiles by applying Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System across different cultural contexts. They found that Chinese English learners tend to be significantly influenced by external expectations and therefore, they suggested tailoring approaches to align students' cultural backgrounds and their individual motivational patterns to enhance their learning outcomes. Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) explored factors contributing to the demotivation of Japanese university students learning English. With a self-developed questionnaire, they identified five main demotivating external factors, such as course books, inadequate school facilities, test scores, noncommunicative methods, and teachers' competence and teaching styles. Busse and Walter (2013) investigated the development of motivation among freshmen of foreign language majors in German degree program in two UK universities, and found that traditional assessment methods had a negative impact on motivation. To counter this impact, they proposed diversifying assessment methods to engage students.

In the Chinese context, Li and Liu (2015) gave an overview of studies on motivation among Chinese undergraduate English majors over the past three decades and found that overall, there has been a growing body of literature on this field involving different theoretical frameworks and measuring tools, with Gardner and Lambert's (1959) social psychological perspective and its corresponding tool – AMTB as the most popular one; still others draw on Dörnyei's (2005) second language motivational self-system and attempt to interpret how learners' attributes such as motivation, language aptitude and personalities affect their learning efforts and effects. More recently, Li and Liu (2017) conducted a comparative study on 607 Chinese undergraduates' motivation to learn English, using a self-designed English Learning Motivation Scale, and found statistical differences between English majors and non-English majors in learning goals, expended efforts and attitudes towards English learning, as well as differences between male and female undergraduates in the above-mentioned dimensions plus desire to learn English. Unlike Li and Liu (2015, 2017), Zhou et al. (2011) carried out a longitudinal study on Chinese undergraduates' motivation in English learning across five universities and compare their

motivational levels in junior and senior years with that of their freshman and sophomore years on campus. Their study finds that undergraduates, both English and non-English majors, have complex and varying motivational profiles and these motivational dimensions such as interest in English, desire to go abroad, immediate achievements, etc., tend to change as they transition across the grades.

These studies and their findings show the importance of motivation in foreign language acquisition, but they focus on the general picture of Chinese undergraduates' motivational profiles, with some on English majors but very few on English majors' motivation to learn translation. Over the past years, however, there has been an emerging interest in this domain, especially in translation in the broad sense – both oral and written translation.

### *B. Studies on Students' Motivation to Learn Translation*

The following section provides a literature review of motivational studies on English majors in relation to translation learning both within the Chinese context and without. The review will examine the multi-faceted nature of motivation and its influence on shaping learners' outcomes in translation learning across different geographical and academic backgrounds.

Lung (2005) conducted a rare survey of translation training needs and motivations among adult students in a university in Hong Kong, China. Her findings indicated that only a handful of students chose to learn translation with a career in translation in mind (6%), while one third of the respondents (33%) regarded personal upgrading, i.e., moving up the social ladder through improvement of skills and advancement of knowledge, as their main motive.

Wu (2016) explored 358 English majors' translation beliefs and development features, and found that students tended to converge on the beliefs of translation learning strategies, and diverge on their self-concepts of translation learning and the nature of translation. He also found that students were not really extrinsically motivated in translation learning as demonstrated by the low mean score for the item of "I learn translation so as to introduce China to world", and suggested more teacher guidance required to boosting students' perception of the importance and the nature of translation and translation learning.

Wu (2013) conducted an exploratory study on profiling interpreter students' motivation and de-motivation in a Chinese context. Using both questionnaire and students' reflective essays, the paper found that interpreter trainees were prone to becoming demotivated during the training process for various reasons, both internal and external ones, and future-self guide turns out to be more motivating than external motivating factors. He also categorized four groups of demotivating factors, including self, peer, teacher, and institute-, and noted that the teacher-related factor stood out as the most cited demotivating factor.

More recently, Chen et al. (2022) applied Keller's (2000) motivational course design model – ARCS Model to redesign the translation course. The four constructs of ARCS, namely Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction, are used to design a genre-based approach to teaching translation to undergraduate English majors in a Chinese context. With new theoretical framework grounded on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, ample reference materials, corpus-driven teaching tool, and timely feedback, students reported a higher level of motivation towards the translation course. The findings, though insightful, centered on curriculum design and reform, and therefore, were largely confined to the classroom environment and teaching method only.

In contexts other than Chinese, Ameri and Ghahari (2018) focused on both motivating and demotivating factors on translator trainees in an Iranian context. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 159 undergraduates from two state universities. The study found that students were motivated by three extrinsic factors, including external regulation like encouragement, degree conferment, and certificate issuance, introjected regulation like social prestige accorded to their professional performance, and identified regulation like overseas development prospect. On the contrary, undergraduate trainees were susceptible to demotivating factors related to teachers, administration – class size as a prominent issue, and facilities – class room environment and library collections, etc.

Horváth and Kálmán (2020) presented an empirical study aimed at gaining insight into motivation factors behind 50 MA graduates at the time of graduation in a university in Hungary. A questionnaire was devised and administered to the students. Data analyses seemed to indicate that intrinsic motivation, ideal self, mastery of translation skills, and significant others were the most prominent motivators, and the stronger a student's intrinsic motivation was, the more efforts s/he would expend on learning behaviors.

From these studies, it can be noticed that the constructs of motivation are multi-faceted, and that is why different experts in the domain give different definitions and propose different motivational models. For the current study, the social-psychological perspective of motivational model proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1959) is employed.

### *C. Motivation From the Social-Psychological Perspective*

Within the context of second language (English-speaking Canadians learning French as a second language) learning, Gardner defined motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (1985, p. 10). Each of the components, namely the goal, effort, desire, and favorable attitudes are indispensable to motivation. Only when a person's desire to achieve the goal and his / her favorable attitudes toward the goal are connected with the effort, can h/she be motivated. In other words, motivation involves both an attitudinal component and goal-directed behaviors.

Based on this definition, Gardner (1985) divided motivation into two types: integrative and instrumental motivations. Integrative motivation refers to a learner's "positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language" (p. 30), including attitude toward the people speaking that language, interest in learning that language, and intention to integrate into that community. Instrumental motivation refers to personal gains from pursuing the goal – learning a second language, such as getting better education and / or better job opportunities. And compared to instrumental motivation, integrative motivation matters more, because an instrumental motivation, no matter what, has associated with it some degree of willingness to interact with that specific community in question.

For years, Gardner's social-educational model centered on motivation has proved popular in the field of foreign / second language studies. However, when transferred to the specific domain of translation learning in a Chinese context, the model should be adjusted to fit the situation. For translation students, the purpose of learning translation is not to be integrated into the English-speaking communities, but be effective cross-cultural communicators. After all, translation is about communication (Hatim & Mason, 2005). In light of this, the original integrative motivation is amended to become valuational motivation, i.e., students' attitude toward, perception of, and interest in translation and translation learning.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Subjects

The subjects were 34 third-year English majors from one intact class in a university in China. It should be noted that the university is neither a 211-project nor a 985-project university, and is located in a fourth-tiered city in China. Among them, four were male students and 30 were female students, with an average age of 20.35. All of them have finished one semester of translation learning from English to Chinese, and therefore, are considered to have developed some understanding of translation.

#### B. Research Instrument

To address the research questions, two research instruments are used: one is the revised Attitude / Motivation Test Battery and the other focus-group interview.

##### (a). Attitude / Motivation Test Battery

Motivation in translation learning needs to be measured. In this study, the measuring tool is the Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (short for AMTB) developed by Gardner, and it is revised based on the author's years of experience in teaching the course Translation Theories and Practice. In terms of content, the test measures students' valuational motivation and instrumental motivation in translation learning. For valuational motivation, it is divided into three parts: desire to learn translation (Item 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9), motivational intensity (Item 2, 4, 11, 13, 16), and attitude towards translation (Item 12, 15, 17). Instrumental motivation is measured by Item 7, 10, 14 and 18. Together, there are 18 items in the Battery.

The items in the questionnaire follow the form of a three-level Likert scale ranging from 1 to 3. The scoring key was not shown on the questionnaire when administered and all items were presented in a randomized order. Students were instructed to answer the items by choosing the letter of the alternative that appeared most applicable to him/her. A majority of the items were positively worded with a few exceptions in hopes of reducing systemic response tendencies that are independent of the item per se (Item 12 & 15). The maximum score is 54, and the minimum 18. The questionnaire was administered via Wenjuanxing, a widely used online survey platform in China.

##### (b). Focus-Group Interview

Focus groups are usually groups of 6 to 10 participants brought together to engage in a discussion focusing on a small number of issues. It gives more flexibility as there is no "interviewer" but rather a facilitator who moderates the discussion, allowing smoother and freer flow of discussion among the participants. In educational contexts, focus-group interview can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular course to probe into what was working, what was not working and why. In this regard, focus groups can not only consolidate existing knowledge about the participants' views and attitudes, but also stimulate ideas. In this study, six students were selected to take part in the focus-group interview. The six participants shared one homogeneous feature, i.e., they were members of the class committee and knew their classmates well, especially their academic affairs. Therefore, it was believed that they could represent a particular constituency – their class, and capture a wider spectrum of perspectives. The interview was audio-recorded for later access and interpretation.

#### C. Pilot Study

The questionnaire was administered to a group of 40 third-year English majors of another intact class from the same University. Minor adjustments were made to the negatively worded items so that students understand them correctly. The students finished the questionnaire within 15 minutes. Reliability test showed that the value for Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire was  $\alpha = .730$ , meaning acceptable by most standards. For focus-group interview, a pilot study was carried out among 6 students from the same class that has 40 students. It was conducted in English, but the output was limited as the interviewees struggled to express themselves in English. So, in the actual study, Chinese instruction was opted and the

script was later translated into English. A question set was prepared to probe into students' views towards translation learning.

#### D. Survey Procedures

All subjects were asked to take the motivation test in class, and since no one was absent when the drop-in test was carried out, all 34 questionnaires were returned and all were valid.

#### E. Data Analysis

For quantitative data, they were analyzed using SPSS V. 25. Both descriptive statistics, normality test, and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test were computed. For qualitative data, they were transcribed following standard orthographic principles since "the focus of interest was the content of the discussion, rather than other linguistic features" (Napier, 2011). Next, the transcribed data were translated by a certified translator (with a CATTI Level II Translation certificate), and then checked by another experienced translation teacher with a doctoral degree in translation studies, to ensure reliability and validity. Two-step coding was performed: initial coding, where the transcription was read and re-read, broken into chunks of information, and explicitly labelled; second-level coding, where patterns emerging across individual accounts were noticed and captured to form more abstract codes (Napier, 2011, p. 67). These abstract codes are presented in a hierarchy, in the form of a tree diagram for easier interpreting and understanding.

#### F. Ethical Considerations

The participants were de-identified in both questionnaire survey and interviews, and ensured that all data obtained were solely used for research purposes. In addition, the interview was held in a venue recommended by the students themselves, and carried out in Chinese, creating a relatively relaxing and comfortable environment for them to air their views fully and freely.

#### G. Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the overall motivational level of Chinese English majors in translation learning?

RQ2: What are their motivational profiles in translation learning?

RQ3: Which motivation is stronger: valuational motivation or instrumental motivation?

RQ4: How do English majors view translation and why?

### IV. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents both quantitative and qualitative results and their analyses, and in doing so, answers the research questions.

#### A. Students' Overall Motivational Level in Translation Learning

TABLE 1  
AVERAGE SCORE OF AMTB MOTIVATIONAL TEST  
Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TOTAL	41.9412	4.02975	34

Descriptive data from Table 1 show that on average, students scored a mean score of 41.94 out of a maximum score of 54. These data seem to indicate that overall, students were moderately motivated to learn translation: they held positive feelings toward translation as a course, considered translation helpful to their future development, and expended some effort to do well in this course, and therefore, RQ1 was answered.

#### B. Students' Motivational Profiles in Translation Learning

TABLE 2  
MEAN SCORES FOR EACH ITEM IN AMTB MOTIVATIONAL TEST

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	34	1	3	2.29	.524
Q2	34	1	3	1.97	.627
Q3	34	1	3	2.00	.696
Q4	34	1	3	2.79	.479
Q5	34	1	3	2.21	.479
Q6	34	2	3	2.38	.493
Q7	34	1	3	2.47	.615
Q8	34	1	3	2.26	.618
Q9	34	1	3	2.18	.576
Q10	34	1	3	2.44	.561
Q11	34	1	3	1.94	.547
Q12	34	2	3	2.62	.493
Q13	34	2	3	2.47	.507
Q14	34	2	3	2.68	.475
Q15	34	1	3	2.59	.557
Q16	34	1	3	2.12	.913
Q17	34	1	3	2.03	.521
Q18	34	2	3	2.50	.508
Valid N (listwise)	34				

From Table 2, it can be seen that students registered higher scores for Item 4, 12, 14, 15, and 18. These high scores show that students did not find translation dull (Item 12,  $m=2.62$ ); they would not rather spend their time on subject other than translation (Item 15,  $m=2.59$ ); they were ready to seek others' help whenever they encountered problems in understanding what they learned in translation class (Item 4,  $m=2.79$ ); and they found translation useful to their career development and help them become a better cross-cultural communicator (Item 14,  $m=2.68$ , and Item 18,  $m=2.50$ ). In other words, students in general had slightly favorable attitudes toward translation, wanted to spend some efforts on this course, and considered the course helpful with practical meaning. These seem to indicate that, to some extent, Chinese undergraduate English majors had both strong valuational and instrumental motivations in translation learning. The is different from their motivation in foreign / second language learning, where students are usually inclined to one over the other.

On the other hand, students scored low for Item 2 ( $m=1.97$ ), 3 ( $m=2.00$ ), 11 ( $m=1.94$ ), 16 ( $m=2.12$ ), and 17 ( $m=2.03$ ). For instance, in the aspects of motivational intensity, most students failed to actively reflect on what they have learned in translation class (Item 2), voluntarily answer questions in translation class as much as possible (Item 11), and work hard to learn translation (Item 16). Their desire to learn translation is not very strong, either, as most would only attend a translation club at the School of Foreign Languages occasionally if there is one (Item 3). And for many, learning translation is not that really enjoyable (Item 17). All these are measurements of students' valuational motivation in translation learning. And the data seem to indicate that students were not intrinsically motivated to learn translation, either in class or after class.

These findings paint a complex and multi-dimensional picture of students' motivational profiles in translation learning, a finding consistent with previous studies that indicate there are different factors accounting for students' (de)motivation to learn translation. With that, RQ2 was addressed.

### C. Comparison of Students' Valuational Motivation and Instrumental Motivation

TABLE 3  
MEAN SCORES FOR VALUATIONAL MOTIVATION AND INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ValuMoti	34	1	3	2.2750	.5736
InstruMoti	34	1	3	2.5225	.5398

Table 3 shows that, on average, students scored higher in instrumental motivation ( $m=2.5225$ ) than in valuational motivation ( $m=2.2750$ ). To determine whether such a difference is statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was initially considered. However, to run a parametric test like this, the two sets of data, namely the valuational motivation data and instrumental motivation data, should be normally distributed.

Given the sample size is 34, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess normality (Marshall & Samuels, 2017). The results showed that only the valuational data set met the requirement ( $p=.309$ ), whereas the instrumental motivation data failed the test ( $p=.006$ ). Since one dataset violated the normality assumption, a paired-samples t-test was not considered appropriate. Instead, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, a non-parametric alternative, was performed (Gupta, 1999).

TABLE 4  
WILCOXON SIGNED RANK TEST RESULT – RANKS

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
InstruMoti - ValuMoti	Negative Ranks	11 <sup>a</sup>	10.77	118.50
	Positive Ranks	23 <sup>b</sup>	20.72	476.50
	Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	34		

a. InstruMoti < ValuMoti

b. InstruMoti > ValuMoti

c. InstruMoti = ValuMoti

TABLE 5  
WILCOXON SIGNED RANK TEST RESULT – TEST STATISTICS

	InstruMoti - ValuMoti
Z	-3.063 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks test showed that instrumental motivation (mean rank = 20.72) was rated stronger than valuational motivation (mean rank = 10.77,  $Z = -3.063$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). This indicates that on the one hand, students found translation meaningful and important to them, especially in the aspects of obtaining a proficiency test like TEM 8 and landing a good job, a finding consistent with that of Wu (2016) and Ameri and Ghahari (2018). Translation is also believed to be helpful in helping students become better educated and more knowledgeable (Q10), a finding congruent with that of Lung (2005) that personal upgrading is a driving force propelling students to work hard on translation. Additionally, learning translation is regarded conducive to cultivating more competent cross-cultural communicators, helping people from different cultures understand each other better. However, this utilitarian benefit of helping different cultures understand one another better or altruism does not coincide with that of Horváth and Kálmán (2020), who found altruism to be de-motivating rather than motivating for translation students in a Hungarian context.

On the other hand, though instrumentally motivated, students in this study failed to take the initiative to learn translation. Apart from seeking help from teachers and peers to solve problems in translation learning, they would only occasionally practice translation off class if they had the opportunity (Item 5,  $m=2.21$ ), and attend translation workshops, seminars or meetings only when they had nothing else to do (Item 9,  $m=2.18$ ). That is why overall, students considered they just did enough work to get along in translation learning (Item 16,  $m=2.12$ ). In other words, students' desire to learn translation was not strong enough, and their motivational intensity was low. This helped answer RQ3. And since translation itself requires a lot of practice after class, the assumption that they could learn translation well just by attending translation classes or seeking help from others is far from realistic. They needed to put more efforts to enrich their understanding of translation and practice it. But why they did not?

#### D. Students' Views on Translation

In order to further interpret the seemingly conflicting quantitative data shown above, scrutinize the demotivating factors in students' translation learning, and address the last research question, focused-group interviews were conducted among six students who had filled out the questionnaires previously. This QUAN→qual design, or "[q]uestionnaire survey with follow-up interview or retrospection" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 170) would allow the researchers to account for the unexpected statistical results in the first phase.

Reiterative examination and analysis of the data reveal three major demotivating factors labelled as (1) institute-related, (2) administrative-related, (3) self-related. The order of significance was based on the broadness of the consensus reached among the interviewees and the number of their occurrences. These three factors were further divided into sub-categories. The institute-related factor consists of (a) the location of the University in an economically less developed city; (b) very few translation-related activities offered by the School of Foreign Languages throughout their study there. The administrative-related factor consists of (a) large class size for foreign language majors, (b) the assessment system, and (c) limited book collections on translation. Lastly, the self-related factor mainly lies in some students' unfavorable attitude towards English as a major (see Figure 1 below).

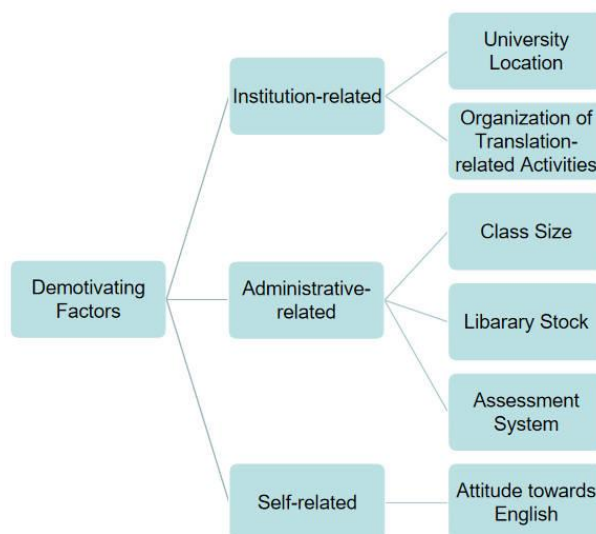


Figure 1. Demotivating Factors in Chinese English Majors' Translation Learning

For these Chinese English majors, the institute-related factor was considered as the most significant demotivating element. Students complained that because of the university's location in an economically less developed city in China, they had no opportunities to do translation-related part-time jobs ever since they came to study in this University. That explained why they did not score high for Q5 in the Battery, as they hardly had any idea of what translation-related work would be like and therefore, were hesitant to take the opportunity even if there was one for them practice translation off campus. For them, the most common and available part-time job was home-tutoring, i.e., teaching primary or junior middle school students English. Another subcategory of institute-related demotivating factor is few translation-related activities like seminars or workshops on campus. Students explained that "In our School, the conventional competitions for the four-year program are English speaking, English drama night, English writing, and English Teaching Skills Competitions for freshmen, sophomores, junior and seniors, respectively. So, many of the lectures, seminars and workshops are about improving English proficiency in skills other than translation." For this reason, they did not score high for Q9. This finding in some way corresponds to studies that found institute-related factors can be demotivating to students in translation learning (Ameri & Ghahari, 2018; Wu, 2013; Wu, 2016), but it differs from those findings in that it refers to two totally aspects that are institute-related, i.e., its location and availability of translation-related activities. The less-favorable geographical location deprives them the opportunities of practicing translation as a part-time job while the lack of translation activities reduces their exposure to translation-related knowledge and skill practice.

Administrative-related factor is the second most demotivating factor cited by the students. They argued that class size of more than 30 was too big for translation learning. An ideal class size should be around half of the current size, i.e., 15 to 20. For example, they expressed that "Translation is difficult, and with a class size of 34, you cannot expect your teacher to answer all your questions nor evaluate your translation homework every time it is handed in." This is supported by studies of (de)motivating factors in translation learning that raise the issue of big class size as a concern in translation class (Ameri & Ghahari, 2018), resulting in inadequate communication between teachers and students with subsequent demotivation in students (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009). They also asserted that the current assessment system creates a loophole in regulating the translation course. The assessment system is formative-based, relying more on assignment performance and class attendance than final examination, and "since we got 34 students in the class, the teacher does not really check our homework one by one. And so, sometimes we just machine-translate to get by, and the teacher won't find out." This finding is consistent with that of Busse and Walter (2013) that inappropriate assessment methods can be demotivating to students. In addition, some students mentioned that the book stock in the library is limited and old, especially those related to translation studies, in other words, inadequate school facilities can be a source of demotivation among students (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009). That explains why the mean scores for Q6, Q13, and Q16 were not high.

The self-related factor was a third but less determining factor. For example, the students admitted it is not that they did not like translation, but that they just did not like English as a major at all, and did not have the intention to engage in a career related to English or translation. A handful of students (about 6 to 7) in their class did not choose English as their major in the first place, as they explained, "Some of our parents made the decision when filling out our ideal majors for colleges and universities when we took Gaokao or College Entrance Examination. Our parents believed that English was good and it would be easy for us to find a job after graduation. But that is not what we really want." For these students, studying English could be a painful experience, and even more so for studying translation which requires more than good English proficiency to do well. Although this situation was not common, it still constituted a source of demotivation for a few students. This finding in some way coincides with that of Lung (2005), whose survey found that students' low motivation in translation learning originated from the fact that they did not envision their future-selves engaged in a career related to translation.

## V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study probes into the underlying factors that promote and / or inhibit undergraduate English majors' motivation towards learning translation in a Chinese context by adopting a QUAN-qual research design. Analyses of the empirical statistics triangulated with qualitative data indicate that, similar to the complex motivational profiles depicted in foreign / second language acquisition (Li & Liu, 2015, 2017; Zhou et al., 2011), students' motivation in translation learning is also complicated and multi-dimensional. The study identifies interest in subject matter, motivational intensity and instrumentality as major motivating factors, especially the instrumental benefits associated with translation and translation learning. The findings are consistent with other studies on students' motivation to learn translation (Ameri & Ghahari, 2018; Horváth & Kálmán, 2020). In other words, students are driven by extrinsic regulation such as obtaining a relevant certificate and increasing their employment prospects, identified regulation such as self-betterment, and altruism such as to become a better bridge-builder across different cultures. The last factor – altruism, contributing negatively in other context like Hungary (Horváth & Kálmán, 2020) but positively in the present research, may be due to the requirements in China's National Criteria of Teaching Quality for BA Programs in English that stipulates the cultivation objectives for English majors in institutes of higher education, i.e., educating English majors capable of introducing China and its culture to the world in an appropriate manner (Li & Hu, 2021).

However, the current study also indicates that students' instrumental motivation was statistically stronger than their valuational motivation in translation learning, and subsequent qualitative data analyses identifies three major de-motivating factors, including institute-related, administrative-related, and self-related factors, the sequence of which follows the order of diminishing significance. This finding differs from previous studies that identified teaching method (Chen et al., 2022), or teacher-related factor as the most demotivating factor (Wu, 2016). These findings indicate that the motivation to learn translation is situation-specific, and since motivation plays a decisive role in human behavior and its corresponding performance (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985; Keller, 2010), it may require different measures to address the imbalanced motivational landscape depicted in this study. And this may have pedagogical implications.

### A. Pedagogical Implications

It is clear from the findings that external conditions did seem to have a direct impact on students' intrinsic or valuational motivation, and students might be simultaneously instrumentally motivated and intrinsically demotivated. Therefore, to boost their valuational motivation towards translation learning, some measures may be needed. First, since it is impossible to change the physical location of the University, translation teachers may consider introducing some simulated translation tasks or projects (Li, 2002; Li et al., 2015) to the students, and organize more translation-themed seminars and lectures, both online and offline, to expand their horizons. Translation teachers may also introduce different translation competitions and contests to students and encourage them to take part in those competitions, so as to increase their exposure to translation and translation-related activities.

Second, regarding the class size, it is a thorny issue beyond the teachers' capability. However, the problems raised by students associated with large class sizes such as untimely and inadequate feedback from the teacher – reveal insufficient self-directed learning strategies on the part of the students. That is, students may not be adequately trained in managing their learning, hence heavily reliant on their teacher's feedback.

Third, regarding limited and outdated translation book collections in the library, the teachers may help introduce on-line resources to students, but overtly heavy reliance on the teachers for choice of materials again indicates that students may not be well-trained in organizing their learning. Therefore, in future translation training, teachers should highlight the importance and significance of self-directed learning strategies among students (Wu, 2013; Wu, 2016) to manage their learning and enhance valuational motivation.

Lastly, regarding some students' unfavorable attitude towards translation which derived from their low interest in learning English as a major, tailored approaches may be required based on individualized situations (Taguchi et al., 2009), such as earlier intervention from headteachers, subject teachers and tutors that may help them become more responsive and adaptive to the reality. And with more opportunities created to cater to their need of practicing and knowing more about translation as well as more training on self-directed learning strategies to manage their learning, their attitude towards English, in particular towards translation learning, may be improved in the long run. All these implications may hold significance for English majors from universities other than 211-project or 985-project universities. After all, less than 200 out of the 1300-plus universities that offer BA program for English majors in China are on the list of 211-/985-Project universities.

### B. Limitations and Suggestions

This study aims to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Chinese English majors' motivational profiles and insights into the reasons that account for their complex dispositions. Despite the enlightening findings, this study has some limitations. First, considering the small sample size (n=34), the findings may be only applicable to English majors with similar geographical and academic backgrounds. Second, the study did not look into the influence of gender on motivation to learn translation, which in many cases is an influential independent variable. Therefore, future studies may address (de)motivating factors with a larger sample size and a more balanced gender ratio from other universities to better understand the complexity of students' motivational profiles in translation learning and identify potential

differences in undergraduate English majors' motivational profiles. In this way, the BA translation training program could be better tailored to encourage and sustain English majors' motivation in translation learning.

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