

Group Research Project in Translator Training: Students' Perceptions



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Abstract Learner-centred teaching is one of the key elements in almost all curricular innovations in translation training in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, trainers and scholars have advocated the introduction of research and teamwork into the training of future translators and interpreters. While these ideas and approaches are often seen as desirable, we have little knowledge about whether and how they work in the context of translation training, which may have a very different set of goals compared with other disciplines. For instance, how do translation students see these notions and approaches? What are their experiences with them? Such questions warrant our attention in order to ensure any success of curricular innovations. This chapter adopts a qualitative approach and looks at the reactions of students from an MA in Translation Studies programme towards group work/project, which is commonly used in second language teaching, in their learning of translation. To offer the reader an authentic feel of how the learner-centred approach blending research and teamwork was received, the students' comments are presented verbatim with little editing. Their curricular and pedagogical implications are discussed where appropriate.

Keywords Learner-centred teaching · Translation training · Curricular innovation · Students' perceptions · Group work/project

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1 Introduction

Since the turn of the century, translation teachers and scholars have been calling for learning- and learner-centred curriculum in translation education (e.g. González Davies 2004; Li and Hu 2006; Orlando 2016; Tao and Xie 2019), and many approaches, methods and strategies have been proposed to realize this goal. Kiraly (2000) proposed the social constructivist approach to translation education and argued that learner-centredness is one of the most prominent characteristics of the approach. Li (2015) proposed the project-based approach to teaching business translation as a means to place translation students at the centre of learning. For similar purposes, Mellinger (2018) advocated problem-based learning in the teaching of computer-assisted translation, and Massey et al. (2014) suggested the application of action research in the teaching of translation. In all the propositions, learner-centred curriculum and teaching is one of the key features and often the primary motivation for their application.

What is a learner-centred curriculum? What does learner-centred teaching mean? According to Jones (2007), learner-centred teaching and learning refers to the shift of focus from the teacher to the learner in teaching and learning activities. It stresses learners’ independence by having them take an active role in their learning and construction of meaning. The following are amongst the most prominent features of a learner-centred curriculum (Cullen et al. 2012; Weimar 2012):

1. Learners’ active participation in learning and teaching activities
2. Learners’ frequent communications with their peers and the teacher
3. Learners’ active involvement in meaning construction
4. Learning from peers
5. Collaboration amongst peers
6. Learner’s reflections on their learning.

Li sums up the differences between teacher-centred approach and learner-centred approach:

Teacher-centred approach	Learner-centred approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on the teacher, the holder of knowledge • Learners sit quietly, receiving knowledge from the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on the learner as well as the teacher • Learners construct knowledge of their own through experiencing and reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on teaching, which is understood mainly as the transmission of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is more on learning than teaching; emphasis is placed on the development of learners’ critical and problem-solving abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher talks • Learners listen and receive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners interact with peers as well as the teacher • The teacher facilitates

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Teacher-centred approach	Learner-centred approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners work alone • The teacher monitors and evaluates learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn (construct knowledge) • Through interactions with peers, the teacher and the materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher answers questions • The teacher is responsible for the teaching and learning to occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take responsibility for their learning, which leads to a heightened sense of ownership and strengthened motivation about learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specially designed contrived materials are used in teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic (or simulated) materials and contexts are adopted in teaching

Li (2013, p. 3)

The implementation of a learner-centred curriculum needs appropriately designed learning activities. In such activities, learners are to acquire knowledge via active participation, identifying problems, making decisions, constructing knowledge, collaborating with peers and monitoring their own learning. The teacher as the facilitator is to provide the support and consultation when needed. Amongst others, group work is often recommended as a useful and effective activity for this purpose, because it is easy to design and “students have equal responsibility for performing a task and find it difficult to ‘hide’ in a small group” (Brown 2007).

Group work refers to any learning and teaching activities that require students working together on a task in and out of the classroom. It can be small, involving 3–5 people, or large, involving more people in a group. According to Exley and Dennick (2004), group work should have the following aims.

1. Development of intellectual understanding, abilities and skills
2. Development of communication skills and teamwork spirit
3. Growth in self-confidence
4. Enhancement of sense of responsibility for their own learning
5. Development of reflective learning
6. Development of professional standards, values and ethics (pp. 4–5).

These aims fit in well with the skills and competences required of professional translators today. In addition to the bilingual, extralinguistic, strategic, instrumental competences and translation knowledge proposed by PACTE (2005), professional translators, especially those who aim to become full-time freelancers, will also need another set of skills to succeed in the market today (see, e.g., Rotheneder 2007; Coban 2015; Robinson et al. 2016). Communication skills are essential since they will be working with other team members and may have to deal with clients about their requirements, negotiate prices, seek clarifications about the source text or simply maintain good will with them. As freelance translators, they may need to make formal presentations about themselves and their services in order to bid a translation project and engage in a translation project. As part of the overall communication skills, their ability to make an effective presentation within a specified time limit will also be handy for a professional translator. Besides, large translation projects may

have to be shared amongst several colleagues, especially due to time constraint and short turnaround time. As a translator, the ability to work with his or her teammates and maintain positive collegiality matters a great deal on such occasions. Lastly, when placed in a leading position for a project, the leadership and coordination skills will be called for to ensure a smooth execution and timely completion of the project. As Rotheneder (2007) suggests, these “transferable skills”, like subject specific skills, should be “taught reiteratively and in context” to translation students (pp. 4–5). Various scholars and trainers have also stressed the importance of research skills in translator training, acknowledging the interrelationship between practice and research (e.g. Gile 1995; Nord 2005; Kelly 2005; Pöschhacker 2010; Orlando 2016). With the hope to bridge the gap between practice and research, Orlando advocates that translation programmes should train future translators and interpreters as *practisearchers*—a term coined by Gile (Orlando 2016, pp. 54–55). Group work can make students develop a host of skills vital for success in the professional world (Caruso and Woolley 2008). It is known to have, amongst many others, the following key advantages:

1. When working in a group, students will be tackling more complicated problems than working alone, thus are more likely to engage in a field of study and obtain more knowledge about their subject (Qin et al. 1995; Kuh et al. 2007).
2. When working in a group, students need to improve their communication skills, as they need to communicate with each other in order to complete the project at hand. They will also need to develop other professional skills, such as the skills to research for information, coordinate efforts, organize activities and present their views.
3. Finelli et al. (2011) found that employers value their employees’ ability to work effectively within diverse groups. It has been claimed that group work can enhance students’ skills in collaborating and coordinating well with others (Bennett and Gadlin 2012).

It is exactly because of these perceived benefits of small group work that group work has also been advocated for translation training (e.g. Nord 2005; González Davies and Scott-Tennent 2005; Rotheneder 2007). However, how effective is it when implemented in the context of translator training? Do students carry it out as the teacher expects? What are student’s experiences of completing such group work? Do they gain as much from it as expected? Such questions are still insufficiently investigated, at least in the context of translation education. Li et al. point out:

Although literature abounds with propositions of innovative methods and approaches to teaching translation [...] relatively few attempts have been made to provide empirical evidence to actually evaluate the anticipated strengths and effectiveness of the proposed methods. Consequently, we are sometimes left wondering whether they are indeed as effective as has been claimed. (Li et al. 2015, p. 2)

This study therefore seeks to find out how group work fared in the context of translation training as a means of putting the student at the centre of translation learning and getting them actively involved in the learning of translation. Besides depicting

how students behaved when completing a group work, the study also looks at how students perceived their learning as a result of completing the assigned group work. It is hoped that the implications will be useful for future similar pedagogical endeavours. For that purpose, we conducted a questionnaire survey of the students who completed a group research project for a practical translation course in the context of English-Chinese translation in the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), China.

2 The Study

2.1 Context of the Study

The study was conducted in the teaching of business translation at the University of Macau, where one of the authors taught the course Business Translation to a group of MA Translation students. Group work was adopted as a way to get students more involved in the curriculum and provide them with an opportunity to develop their skills beyond translation competence per se. As indicated above, these skills would be essential to them as modern-day translators. In fact, a majority of our translation students will not become full-time professional translators when they complete their training programmes, but instead may work as teachers or take up other professions where both translation and bilingual skills are put to use. This is actually an additional reason why it is important that the students get a chance to train and hone their skills in communication, research, collaboration and teamwork, as these are the skills they can easily transfer to other contexts and professions (Bellanca and Brandt 2010). These skills will not only enhance their employability upon graduation but also benefit them throughout their careers.

2.2 Participants and Group Work

There were altogether 22 students taking the course Business Translation, three male and the rest female, aged between 22 and 27 (averaged at 23.5). All of them were native speakers of Chinese and had English as their second language. The course was offered to them in the second year of their programme. The students were instructed to complete a group work in the form of a research project in groups of three or four. It turned out that the 22 students made four groups of four and two groups of three. They were told to choose one of the following topics for their group work:

1. History of business translation in Macao
2. Translation and local economy
3. Translation market in Macao and neighbouring Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland

4. Translation in the Macao gaming industry
5. Tourist translation in Macao: methods and strategies
6. Working conditions of translators and interpreters in Macao
7. Use of translation technology in business translation
8. Professional translators' strategies for dealing with regional dialects of Chinese in business translation
9. Cultural and social issues in business translation
10. Business interpreting in Macao, Hong Kong and Chinese Mainland.

The students were also encouraged to explore topics not included in the above list but truly interesting to them. However, they were requested to consult with the teacher for suggestions and guidance before proceeding with their own topics.

There were three parts to the project. Part One was for the students to survey the literature related to their chosen topic as background reading or documentary analysis. On this basis, if necessary, they would collect translation examples or bilingual texts for analysis. For this part, they were told to focus on any one or more of the issues, such as the methods and strategies for translating the genre in question, the main issues particular to translation of this genre, the current market situation and so on. Part Two was to make a 45-min presentation in English to share their findings with the class and get feedback about their research. Part Three was to write up the research, detailing the project and summarize the findings, incorporating questions and suggestions from the audience, as well as their own reflections on the project.

2.3 The Data Collection and Analysis

The students were invited to complete a questionnaire regarding the project. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was to collect some basic information about the students, such as their age, sex and educational background. The second part was made up of questions about the project, such as their rationale for choosing their respective research topics, the procedures taken to carry out their projects, their major findings and the difficulties they encountered in the process. In addition, they were asked how they prepared for their presentations and to what extent they achieved their goals and objectives for their presentations. In the third part, the students were requested to reflect on their projects. Besides some general questions about their levels of satisfaction with the entire project and the presentation, they were particularly asked to reflect on their gains and possible growth in their research, presentation, communication and coordination skills. They were also encouraged to comment on their growth in team spirit and overall knowledge of the topic they were studying.

When they finished Part Two of the project—the presentation—the questionnaire survey was administered to the students to facilitate their reflection of the group work and collect the data for the present study. The students completed the questionnaires on a voluntary basis. All the customary measures were taken to make sure that the

usual ethical requirements for empirical research were met to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected.

As the questionnaires were mostly open-ended questions, the answers were either tabulated or encoded. The encoding of the data involved repeated reading of the questionnaire responses to identify themes. The summary of the instances of each theme mentioned and referred to in the questionnaire responses was then tabulated and/or listed for reporting. As this study was meant to be more an exploratory study and the subject sample was rather small, no inferential statistics were sought. We are taking a qualitative approach to present some of the most salient themes identified in the data regarding the students' execution and reflection of the group work, with each theme substantiated with related comments from the students. In order to let the reader have a real taste of the responses from the students, we shall enlist all the major relevant responses they made with minimal linguistic editing. That is, so long as the errors or glitches do not hinder understanding, they are left intact. The students' language and their way of expression can also tell the reader more about them.

3 Findings and Discussions

As mentioned above, the entire group work consisted of three parts—researching on the topic, presenting the findings, and summarizing and reflecting on the project. Specifically, the first part was to train the students their research skills, for instance, identification of research questions, conducting literature reviews, collecting and analysing data. Such search and research skills are necessary for translators today. Meanwhile, they would develop familiarity with the knowledge related to their topics. They would also gain some experience of working together in a team. The second part was to train the students in their presentation skills. They would obtain experience in summarizing their group work, highlighting the most important points, making effective visual aids such as PowerPoint slides, delivering the presentation, taking questions from the floor and so on. In this part, the students got to learn to present their ideas in a limited time, selecting the most important points and presenting them in the most effective fashion. The third part would be their reflections on the group work. Reflection has been seen as essential for learning to happen. They students would reflect on their experience of the group work, particularly their gains, the problems encountered and lessons learned.

As the study mainly aims to survey the students' behaviours and understand their experiences of carrying out such a group work, the data analysis focused on their selection of their project topic and particularly the reasons behind it. It was then followed by outlining how they executed the project, particularly the difficulties they might have come across in the process. An in-depth analysis was also made of the students' experiences of preparing and making the class presentations. Finally, the students' reflections of the group work were studied to gauge their gains via the group work.

3.1 Selection of Project Topics

The topics the students chose to work on included translation of advertisements, restaurant menus, tourist texts, texts from the gaming sector, audiovisual texts and musical texts. One group chose to explore how the Internet might be used to aid business translation. Most chose their topics from the provided list and two groups pursued their own topics. They considered a number of factors when making the decision (see Table 1). The most important reasons were that the topic was interesting to themselves and/or their peers (59.1%), the topic was related to their daily lives (54.5%), the topic was seen as useful to their future careers and they would like to learn more about it (50%). Another reason was that they found the topic they selected easy to manage for them. For instance, one group chose to carry out some research on the translation of local tourist brochures because two members of the group happened to be working in the local tourist industry and government offices and they could lay their hands on related bilingual documents or brochures on tourism in Macau. Another group chose to focus on science and technology translation as two of the members had a background in engineering. Other reasons were that little research had been done on the topic (e.g. translation for the gaming industry) and they would like to fill in this gap in research, and that translation of a certain type of text (e.g. subtitles) was distinctly different from other genres they often came across in their study and they would like to study more systematically how they would differ in translation principles and strategies.

It is apparent that the most important deciding factors for their selection of topics were their personal interests, relevance of the topics to their life, usefulness of the topic to their future profession and their ability to complete the project successfully. However, their considerations could differ tremendously. While the aforementioned reasons are mostly pragmatic ones, other reasons some students gave might be somewhat unusual. For instance, one student cited her topic being challenging as the reason—because she liked challenges, and another student chose her topic because it was seen as more relevant to the business translation course. Still another chose her topic because it had been little researched and she was considering she might be able to do something related to it for her graduation thesis.

The implication for teaching is quite straightforward. When teachers design their curriculums, particularly when designing research topics for students, they may want to take into consideration factors such as the relevance of the topics, the usefulness of

Table 1 Considerations in topic selection

Reasons for choosing the topics	Number of students	%
Interesting to themselves and their peers	13	59.1
Relevant to their daily lives	12	54.5
Knowledge useful to their future careers	11	50.0
Easy to find research materials and/or collect research data	9	40.9

the issues to be explored, their students' abilities, etc. That way, they will be able to come up with a list of topics of interest to the students. However, they need to be aware that students' interests and goals can differ considerably. Teachers need to consider their special interests as much as possible. Certain flexibility is therefore called for, i.e. teachers need to allow students to pursue something that truly appeals to them and motivates them and/or prepares them for their future, apart from providing them with a list of suggested topics.

3.2 Execution of the Task

The students displayed different patterns in their overall execution of the project. Some groups kicked off the project with a planning meeting, in which they decided together on the topics of their project and most importantly, their aims and objectives of the project, the timeline of execution, number of meetings they were going to have, division of labour and responsibilities. One group mentioned that they elected a group leader because they believed the project would be better organized and more efficiently executed with a leader. As revealed in the survey, the more frequently they held meetings, the more satisfied they felt about their projects.

On the other hand, two groups reported they held minimal face-to-face meetings. They decided on their topic via e-mails. After deciding on their topics, they simply divided the work and responsibilities. All members completed their bits. However, upon reflection, they found they did not enjoy the project as expected.

Put in perspective, what these two groups did was not group work in its true sense. There was little exchange of knowledge, negotiation of meanings and coordination of their roles in the group occurred in the process. Each member participated in the project as an individual. Little collaboration was enacted, which largely defeated the very purpose of group work. As it turned out, these groups' presentations were much less organized, appeared to be choppy and disintegrated, and the members enjoyed their project much less according to their own post-project reflections. On the contrary, the groups who truly worked together put out generally much stronger presentations, and their pride in their work and their satisfaction gained from this project were noticeable throughout their presentations.

As for pedagogical implications, the teacher needs to give more specific instructions about how the group work should be carried out. Group work is often given to students with the assumption that they all know exactly what it is, what it entails, and how it should be carried out successfully. But actually some students have different understandings about group work and how it should be carried out. They may have different expectations about it even amongst themselves and their expectations could well be different from those of the teachers. Therefore, to ensure that group work will be executed as expected, specific instructions must be given to students as to how they should proceed to carry out a project as a group, e.g. by meeting together, negotiating their methodology, discussing their findings and drawing conclusions.

3.3 *Sharing of Their Projects*

All the groups were asked to share their findings in class. Each group was given 45 min to present their work, including no less than 15 min of Q&A. They were also told to prepare activities for the class in order to get their audience to participate and practice. All the presentations were made within the allotted time. In general, most groups (18 out of the 22) set up very clear goals for their projects and presentations. For instance, the group on translation of movie titles in the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan reported that they met up and decided the following to be their goals of the presentation:

1. To let our classmates know about [the] movie title translation (s6).
2. To let our classmates practice to enhance their translation skills of movies, particularly movie titles (s6).
3. To [make our classmates] aware of the influence of cultures when translating movies (s6).

While this group focused on sharing their knowledge so that their peers could get something out of their projects, another group, which studied translation of advertisements, emphasized they wanted to get feedback from their peers about their work besides sharing their knowledge with them. They decided on the following as their goals for the presentation.

1. To present the theories contextualizing the whole project (s9).
2. To demonstrate the main findings of the project (s9).
3. To offer a chance for discussion and look for suggestions for further study with respect to this research (s9).

All the groups reported that they generally achieved their objectives and goals. They felt their peers learned from their presentations. For instance, the group working on tourist translation reported that “we have [*sic*] made the presentation to get our classmates familiar with the topic [...] we have [*sic*] included a session [for the class] to practice and apply the translation strategies” (s10).

3.4 *Difficulties Encountered*

Most of the participants encountered difficulties as they carried out the projects. Some groups reported they had gathered too many materials. They felt overwhelmed by the amount of data they gathered and felt the data were too complicated for them to sort out and analyse. However, some groups found the contrary. They found that they were not able to get sufficient materials for their projects. They had to explore the library and the Internet in addition to collecting data onsite, and they did not feel they had enough materials to work with.

The other difficulty was that they ran into disagreement on the execution of the project. One group reported their members disagreed on the analysis of the data and

another reported they could not agree on their respective responsibilities. As one student reported, “we fought quite a lot over the analysis of our data” (s15).

To solve these problems, the students consulted the teacher and got his support. They held meetings amongst themselves and found ways to tease out the most irrelevant materials. For disagreement, they also negotiated over and over again amongst themselves. They learned to compromise in order to forge ahead with the project and complete it in time.

As teachers, we should expect students to have difficulties in carrying out group projects. Their challenges could have to do with data analysis or project management. Besides predicting their difficulties and taking necessary proactive measures, teachers should make themselves available for consultation as the students work on the group project. Students should also learn to work together to resolve their disagreements in a group project. They need to understand the importance of negotiation, compromise and empathy.

3.5 Reflections on the Project

The students were encouraged to evaluate and reflect on their projects. They were asked to indicate their satisfaction with their research and their presentation, respectively. They were generally happy or very happy with their research and their presentations. None of them expressed dissatisfaction in either case. However, a number of participants were neutral on this, and more people felt neutral about their presentation than about their research (see Table 2).

The students were also asked to reflect on the execution of the entire project, particularly the research part. Feedback differed quite considerably. Some reported they would like to have more time for the project and the group could be larger. Others thought their topics were too broad and wished they had narrowed down their topics to make them more manageable and focused. Still others thought they would like to have more discussions with their peers. However, they seemed to have more change of mind regarding the writing up of their projects. These changes could be provision of more details, supplying useful information, adding more theoretical foundation

Table 2 Satisfaction with the research project and the presentation

	The research		The presentation	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Very satisfied	4	18.2	5	22.7
Satisfied	15	68.2	11	50.0
Neutral	3	13.6	6	27.3
Not satisfied	0	0	0	0
Very unsatisfied	0	0	0	0

Table 3 Growth in skills and knowledge

Skills and knowledge	Yes (%)	No. of neutral (%)
Research skills	17/77.3	5/22.7
Communication skills	19/86.4	3/13.6
Coordination skills	20/90.9	2/9.1
Team spirit	18/81.8	4/19.2
Presentation skills	18/81.8	4/19.2
Knowledge of the subject	22/100	0/0

and contextualizing the analysis and discussions, as can be seen in the following remarks by the students:

- I would write some details of this project. It is [*sic*] a little simple for me, but the important points are [*sic*] all there (s10).
- The useful websites are [*sic*] not all over there. If I could make changes, I would show all the useful websites (s17).
- To enrich the theory part, I think I can [*sic*] use more than one theory to support my research to make it deeper instead of staying on the superficial level (s9).
- Add classification of movie title translation [...] This could give a general idea about title translation of films (s6).
- Also, add 1 or 2 paragraphs to talk about our own experiences (s13).

The students were then asked to specifically reflect on their gains in the few key skills. They reported they had benefited from this in all the aspects including their research, communication, coordination, collaboration and presentation skills. Besides, they also became more familiar with the topic they studied in the group work (see Table 3).

3.5.1 Research Skills

As mentioned earlier, previous studies have shown the importance of proper research skills to professional translators and interpreters, and actually perhaps so for many professions. One of the major purposes of the group work was to help the students develop their ability to research for solutions when they encountered problems in translation. Amongst all the students, 17 confirmed that they noticed growth in their research skills through doing the group project.

They reported they became more confident in group-based research work, where research skills are essential for the success. In general, they found they had a better knowledge about where and how to find the related information they would need for a project and how to survey the existing research on the topic they would be studying. They had the following to say in this regard.

- We developed our ability to search for information not only online but also from the field as well (s15).

- I know now I can go to DVD shops for searching information. I'm also better at reading related essays (s14).
- I know more about searching useful information on the internet. I know how to read literature effectively using online resources (s16).
- I knew where I could find the data about Macao tourism. I knew how to choose the data suitable for our topics (s20).
- We should not only search the data from the internet but also from other related places (s12).
- We should know more about the source of certain research literature (s1).
- I know more effective ways to search for the information I want. I also know what journals to read in our library (s2).
- I'm more familiar and skilled in finding articles and books related to my research topic (s8).
- I know how to find most useful information from many different sources (s13).

They also felt they improved their skills in data analysis and critical thinking, and referred to this as an indication of their improved overall research ability.

- I think I have better critical thinking skills after working with my group, choosing data for analysis and selecting examples for illustration (s7).
- I've become more objective when analyzing the collected data (s17).
- We had to select data from different sources [...] That made me more sensitive in data analysis and better at deciding on the most suitable data for analysis. Literature review on the related study provided me with a solid theoretical background. Analyzing the data, combined with the direct information, enabled me to summarize the findings of our research (s21).

Another indication of their growth in research was their enhanced awareness of the fact that they still needed to improve their research skills. The following two remarks were typical:

- But at the same time, there are many research skills I have not and I've got so used to my own skills. So if I'm to conduct more research, especially the ones I am interested in, I think I will still need to be equipped with much more research methodology (s21).
- I think I have made some progress in my research skills after doing the project with my group members, but I still have some room to improve (s14).

3.5.2 Communication Skills

All except three of the students felt that the group work helped them improve their communication skills and they enjoyed the process. For instance, they enjoyed the opportunity to exchange views with their peers.

- It has improved our communication skills. We were there to comment on each other. We exchanged our opinions (s1).

Some actually felt that they had great communication skills, which had been further improved in the group work.

- I think I have some good communication skills. I can communicate with our team members and know their intention very quickly and give them some comments (s9).
- I could explain my idea to my members clearly (s5).

Others thought they might not be as good at communication as they thought. They realized that they would need to practice more in order to get across their thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively. Besides they also found some tips for ensuring successful communication. Many felt they needed to find a proper method to talk to their group members and the audience. For instance, they had to speak loudly and clearly when expressing themselves and focus on key information when making presentations.

- Through talking with the group members, I learned how to express oneself (*sic*) (s11).
- Come to more the key points. Deliver my ideas more clearly with few repetitions (s15).
- Effective communication is important when doing group project. Try to speak loudly so that every member can hear your voice when discussing (s16).
- We should choose the appropriate way to communicate with the group members as well as the audiences [*sic*] of our presentation (s18).
- When the group was having discussions, try to express your opinions clearly and openly since it is also a learning process (s6).

They also felt they should maintain courtesy when making suggestions to peers and they should look at things from others' standpoint. They believed this was especially important when they had problems to solve.

- We must maintain courtesy when making suggestions to peers (s16).
- Listen to each group member's idea and give comments. Be gentle to each other when there is a conflict (s11).
- Think more about others' feelings. It is necessary to look at things from others' perspectives (s2).
- Consider others' positions; try to help others improve their performances (s16).
- When giving suggestions, try to be polite (s15).

They recognized that sometimes, compromise was needed for all parties to reach a consensus.

- How to reach an agreement needs clever negotiation and compromise (s3).
- Reaching a consensus among the whole group may require compromise and constant negotiation (s5).

3.5.3 Coordination Skills

All except two of the students felt they improved their coordination skills through doing this group work. They also reported that they had heightened their sense of clear division of labour: everyone doing his/her best, offering help and having sufficient discussions to resolve issues pertaining to the project. They stressed that due consideration should be given to each member's interests and his/her strengths when dividing the work and assigning responsibilities.

- Make full use of academic merits of group members. Some may be good at literature review and others may be skillful at collecting data (s7).
- Obey the division [of labour] and according to the schedule, make progress and combine our work together (s8).
- Balance group members' preferences and the whole project in the assigning of tasks (s13).
- Divide the project into different parts. Let my teammates take charge of the parts which they are interested in (s14).

On the other hand, they felt that as a group, they should meet more often to discuss the problems they encountered and together find solutions.

- At the beginning when the general idea of the project is not formed, regular discussions are necessary (s6).
- Members should discuss about the problems that happened (s4).
- When coming across problems, share them with the group members so that they can give suggestions and solutions (s19).
- Each member was responsible for each part of the project. When we encountered difficulties, we would ask our members of help (s17).
- It is very important to set the goal for the presentation so that we could work towards the same direction (s11).
- Negative emotions should not appear in front of group members. More discussions should be involved (s7).

3.5.4 Team Spirit

Through the group project, the students had a first-hand experience of working together with their peers on the research project. Towards the end, they reflected on this experience and all except four felt positive about the teamwork. Most appreciated the importance of working together and every member making his/her contribution. They also understood more about teamwork and learned how to make it better.

- We must do the research together at any stage of the research (s11).
- Cooperation is the key element in team work project and everyone got their own mission and we shared the owner[ship] together (s4).
- Cooperation is important for teamwork [...] (s6).

- Understand the common objectives of the team. Engage each other to finish the project on time. Encourage each other to finish the project on time (s7).
- All the members are equal and should be cooperative in collecting and analyzing the data (s16).
- It's really a good time to work with my group members as they are very friendly, efficient and hardworking (s19).
- Know how to cooperate to achieve the project. Learn how to work efficiently (s9).

They realized that in order to work together, communication was essential. This included knowing when to seek help in difficulties.

- Communication is a must during the process (s7).
- More participation, more communication, and more time to cooperate (s13).
- I have learned how to communicate with my group members if we have disagreement (s17).
- Learn to reach out and ask for help from other group members (s19).
- Every member was responsible for each part of the project. When we encounter [*sic*] difficulties, we would ask our group members for help before the presentation (s12).
- With a good team leader, we can work efficiently and every problem can get solved via communication (s21).

They realized they needed to be more understanding and supportive to each other ensure effective communication. They helped each other in times of difficulties.

- Give support to those who have busy jobs and allow those to come and meet at more convenient times (s11).
- Although most of us were working in the daytime, we still tried to spend time discussing our project all together, which I think was really good (s14).
- Each members [*sic*] will help each other if one has any problems (s16).
- We helped each other when we had difficulties (s7).
- We had a good team spirit. We all supported each other and we were eager to contribute our best to this group project (s10).
- We helped each other when we had difficulties (s19).

They stressed that they must also have clear plans about the division of labour so that all knew exactly what he or she was expected to do and everyone contributed to the project.

- Assign tasks to group members to make a reading of materials more focused (s3).
- Everyone should have his own part to contribute. No one is exceptional (s19).
- Everyone should make a contribution and no one can just sit aside (s7).
- A large project needs division of labor. Group members need to negotiate the part for which they are responsible. Different members may have preference for different parts. We need to make full use of their respective advantages on different parts (s5).

3.5.5 Presentation Skills

All students except four felt positive about their presentations and reported that their presentation skills improved as a result. First of all, they felt they gained more confidence in public speaking after the exercise. Several students mentioned their satisfaction at their boosted confidence.

- I'm more confident when making a presentation in front of my classmates and [I have got] to know how to control the time of presentation (s10).
- I feel more confident to present than ever [before] (s20).
- I'm more confident than before. I can present [it] without notes. I can present [it] fluently (s5).
- I was confident when I explained our findings. I had eye contacts with the classmates when I presented the ideas (s15).

Many students appreciated the opportunity to make a public presentation to their peers. They believed that through the exercise, they had improved their presentation skills. They felt they were more ready to talk than read when making a presentation and they would be better at managing a presentation both in terms of time and the organization of contents.

- I can now present without taking any paper notes with me (s13).
- I can explain the argument to the audience instead of reading it out. But I believe there is still room for me to improve (s17).
- I can control myself to speak slowly and clearly (s5).
- We know how to find out the main points from a lot of materials (s10).
- There should be activities but they shouldn't take too much time [of the presentation] (s9).
- I understand a presentation is not only about presenting information to the audience, but also sharing our experiences and our findings (s7).

They realized how important it was to make their presentation engaging in order to make a successful and effective communication. They felt that the sharing of their work with the class was also an opportunity to learn from their peers.

- It is important to interact more with the classmates (s22).
- I hope to make [my] classmates involved in the activity (s1).
- When doing presentation we should arouse the listeners' interest and let them join our presentation so that it would receive more attention and response during the whole process (s11).
- We must attract [the] audience's attention by interaction, such as getting them to answer your questions (s13).
- I need to have more interaction[s] with the audience. Maybe I need to prepare more activities to arouse their interest (s9).
- During the presentation, you need to engage your audience as much as possible. Presentation is an interactive activity. You're not only presenting your findings to others, but also you can be enlightened by your audiences [*sic*] (s8).

Perhaps more importantly, they thought about how they might get the audience involved. Upon reflections, some said they would add more activities in order to engage their peers more or they could prepare more thoughtful questions to make the presentation more interesting and encourage more interactions amongst the audience.

- I would like to engage my peers more during the presentation. Before the presentation, some exercises of movie title translation can be handed out to the classmates [...] [I]ncrease interactive exchanges among the presenter and the class (s20).
- Add more activities. Get them participate in the presentation (s22).
- Don't talk too much. Let the audience think and do [translations] so that they will get involved (s12).
- I would like to include more practices if we have enough time. I want more interactions (s17).
- Delete the interaction link [...] It was a little boring because many classmates didn't join in (s11).
- I'd like to let [the] students think of the best translation of each text before showing our findings to them. In this way, we can gather more. Information about the way of translation through sharing tasks. We can also get our audience involved (s6).
- Give effective and instant feedback to the audience's questions (s1).
- Therefore we should have some sessions for the audience to consult what they have heard from us and refresh their mind a while by doing some activities (s12).
- It is much more important to have a feel of what you are going to present to others. If you have a clear picture of what you are going to present to others, surely no presentation is boring (s21).

They also said they might alter the way they designed their presentations. They might try to have an outline for their presentations, organize their contents differently or simply simplify their presentations to ensure that the students will stay tuned and learn something from their presentations. Below are some comments from the groups:

- Set up the outline of the presentation first ... Make the presentation simple to make sure that the audience have more interest in our topic (s2).
- I think we spent quite a long time in giving our presentation that may be quite boring to them. I think I would make it much simpler (s3).
- Furthermore, I might make some changes on the way how we present the subject to the audience (s8).
- It would be nice if we give more explanation on the literature review. It is [*sic*] because not everyone was familiar with the translation theory (s18).
- I would like to add a part on the features and functions of movie titles for they are quite important to know when translating (s19).

Several groups proposed they would make changes to their examples for illustration. Some groups thought their presentations would have been more focused if some of their examples had been deleted. Others thought they should enhance the relevance of their presentation to the local community by, for example, adding more examples concerning local business and culture so that the students would relate to them.

- I might make some changes on the examples so as to better illustrate our points (s7).
- We may delete several examples to make our explanation more focused (s17).
- I may cut some of my examples because there were [too] many examples (s18).
- Find more [and] better local examples in order to explain our points well (s9).
- Add more local examples when explaining the translations (s22).
- Provide more interesting examples (s3).

To enhance their presentation skills, they thought of designing more attractive PowerPoint slides as their presentation aids and rehearse more beforehand.

- A good power point [*sic*] slide is an important element for a good presentation. I learned how to make attractive power point [*sic*] slides when doing this project (s16).
- I understand presentation is not only presenting information to the audiences, but also sharing experiences and our findings (s4).
- Well organized speech needs to be prepared (s18).
- We think we did well in the presentation parts as we had a couple of rehearsals before the presentation (s7).

It is encouraging to note that some realized that the public presentation was their weak point and felt inspired as they felt their speaking skills improved after the presentation. Some even expressed the desire to have more projects in this course.

- This is always my weakest part of the project. I hope that I would have a better performance in the future (s2).
- One more presentation in the semester is welcome (s22).

Overall, the students treated their presentations with care. They displayed proper attitudes towards it though some emphasized more sharing of their findings whereas others put more stress on obtaining feedback from their peers. They also realized the importance of engaging the class by offering more activities with the students. Some may want to illustrate their points with more local examples and others would like to make their presentations more focused by removing some examples.

It can also be seen from the students' reports that making presentations can be a useful skill to develop and improve for them. They found the problems with their presentations by actually making them and they also got to know how they could improve their presentations in overall planning, content selection and exemplar illustration. Such skills will be transferrable into other contexts and in their future careers.

3.5.6 Knowledge of the Topic

All the students confirmed that they had learned a lot about their topic through this group work. The learning occurred in the form of better and more comprehensive knowledge about their research subjects, be it tourism, gaming, Internet use or movie

title translation. Some stressed they became familiar with the research related to their topics.

- Then I have a comprehensive idea of previous research on this topic (s6).
- I know more about features of tourism translation, particularly in Macau (s20).
- Definitely. I have more knowledge about the translation of film titles in different regions in China (s8).
- We are more familiar with subtitle translation (s4).
- We have a better understanding about what subtitle translation is (s5).
- We have a better understanding of the casino names and casino slogans (s13).
- We have a better understanding of the government tax and translations regarding gambling (s11).
- It provided me with a good knowledge about tourism and translation of this genre, and made me well prepared for the future when I need to take a translation assignment in this area (s19).
- We are all more familiar with the topic and we will be able to use appropriate translation theories and approach in the case analysis of examples for illustration (s9).
- Before researching on this topic, I seldom paid attention to or thought about translation of this genre (s22).
- I now know the background of Macao tourism very well. I do have a progress in knowing the topic (s21).
- Have a better understanding on the topic, especially through analyzing the examples (s1).

Some students reported that they gained more knowledge about the translation methods and strategies particularly useful for translating the type of texts they were studying. The students were also pleased that they learned a lot about resources that might be helpful for them as future translators.

- I have been much familiar with the strategies of movie title translation (s6).
- We also have a good command of the strategies for subtitle translation (s3).
- That is really helpful, too. I know now more e-dictionaries that have different strengths and weaknesses when doing translations for different fields. We can make use of them (s16).
- We have also learned some common translation strategies in subtitle translation (s4).
- We now know more about the close relationship between translation and the internet resources (s17).
- I have a much more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the Internet and translation. And I have also found the advantages of the Internet which can help us translate (s14).
- I have now a better knowledge about the sources of the materials I need (s5).

3.5.7 Other Additional Comments

The students also made some other additional comments regarding the group project. For instance, they would like to have more comments from the teacher on their projects and their presentation skills. Rather detailed comments were given to the students, but they thought they would benefit from even more comments about the project.

- It would be better if the professor could offer more comments on our work after our presentation respectively (s5).
- Give very detailed comments after we finished the presentation. Ask related questions about the presentation (s13).
- Get the findings or useful resources for each group and distribute them to classmates (s4).
- The professor can make more comments on the presentation by each group so that we can know our strength and weaknesses. And I think this will be helpful for our future improvement (s9).

Some students suggested that more guidelines should be offered to help them.

- More guidelines and advice about the project would be better (s3).
- It would be better if we could have more guidance on how to realize the objectives of the research topic (s11).
- Need more guidelines and advice on research. Also, it would be perfect if project topics had remained close to topics taught in the course (s17).

While some students preferred that the research topics should be limited to the course, others thought it would be better if there could be a wider range of topics to choose from, or if they were allowed to come up with their own research topics.

- Since this course is mostly about business and legal translation. It would be better to limit the project topics to be more related to this. It would be more practical (s22).
- It would be perfect if the project were related to topics taught in the course (s20).
- To offer more interesting topics for students to choose from (s10).

We can tell from the students' above reflections that the majority of them took an active part in the group work. They performed their own duties as individual members but also worked together with their team on their topics and achieved growth in a variety of skills in the process. Some of their tips for maintaining effective communication, building team spirit, delivering effective presentations and increasing knowledge of their topic have important implications for future students of translation.

4 Concluding Remarks

The study sets out to investigate whether group work as an instrument to promote learner-centred translation teaching is indeed as effective as claimed or expected, and meanwhile to understand students' behaviours and experiences when completing group work, a joint research project in the context of English-Chinese translation teaching. Overall, the student had had positive experiences in doing the group work. They enjoyed working closely together with their peers for the same goal. In the process, they further developed a number of transferable skills essential for them as translators or other bilingual professionals in the twenty-first century. All these suggest that group work is indeed useful in translation training as it puts the learners at the centre of all teaching and learning activities.

While most students took an active part in the group work and gained a great deal in both subject knowledge and social skills, a small number of students appeared luke-warm about the group project and less positive about their experiences of completing the project, and consequently, did not feel they had achieved much growth in their skills. Different reasons might have accounted for this and the present study, meant as a preliminary study of this sort, was not in a position to answer this question. A full understanding will occur when future in-depth studies are designed to investigate different aspects of such pedagogical attempts. However, the fact that not all the students were enthusiastic about the group work does remind us that when introducing new ideas into translation teaching from neighbouring disciplines, we cannot take it for granted that all students will be equally receptive or welcoming. Much needs to be done to ensure all students will take an active role in the learning. How that can be done again awaits more exploration along this line of research.

The real significance of this study is perhaps more of a call to examine the benefits of some of the teaching activities, strategies, methods and approaches in our attempts to go learner-centred in translation teaching. We need to find out whether they really work in translation teaching, to what extent they are applicable, in what and which aspects they are useful, whether the key stakeholders—the students and the teachers, may encounter any difficulties, and how adjustments may be made to ensure a positive experience and benefits for all learners. This is especially important today as we are keen to adopt and benefit from an interdisciplinary approach in translation education and translation education research. To answer these questions, evidence, qualitative and quantitative in nature, will be essential and data-based empirical approach will be a powerful tool to assist us achieving this goal.

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