

Study of Translation Strategies for University Students' English Language Learning in China

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Abstract: University students in China have been stressing how to learn and use English language accurately and effectively, because, in the future, they may become translators, interpreters, and English teachers, or become overseas students, international travelers and even emigrants. Thus, the author chose Chinese university students as the research subject to explore the impact of translation strategies on their English language learning and then to propose a Translation-based English Language Learning Program (Hereinafter referred to as TELLP) to improve the quality and effectiveness of their English language learning. A survey of 500 university students in total from 6 universities in China was conducted through the questionnaire survey. Quantitative and statistic methods and descriptive method were adopted in this study to describe and expound translation strategies and the difference of responses on translation strategies when grouped according to profile (sex, age, major and type of university). Through comprehensive analysis and discussion based on the data collection, some findings were found in the study. Firstly, Students frequently use bidirectional translation strategies, strategies for translation from English to Chinese, and strategies for translation from Chinese to English in their English learning, though a few students avoid the use of translation strategies. Additionally, students from public universities have a better assessment on the use of translation strategies for English learning, while the respondents aged 18-19 tend to avoid using translation strategies. Finally, a TELLP is proposed to serve as the guidance for Chinese students' English language learning based on translation strategies.

Keywords: Translation Strategies; English Language Learning; Chinese University Students; TELLP.

1. Introduction

Since China's reform and opening up, learning English has become a window for Chinese people to understand the world and an effective means to conduct friendly economic and cultural exchanges with foreign countries. English language is really ubiquitous and covers almost all aspects of people's daily life, for example, international network, finance, and popular music. English, as an international language, is also the basic skill for Chinese students to go to the world. Not only can learning English enrich one's knowledge, but it also broadens one's horizons. Therefore, English courses have been offered in all schools ranging from kindergartens to universities in China.

Nevertheless, not all university students in China can learn and use English very well. They all vary in English language learning ability due to their differences in personality, motivation, aptitude, and strategies, which provides people with opportunities to study English language learning from different perspectives. Though these scholars and researchers have studied English language learning, they are mainly concerned with English language studies involving the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, together with relevant theories of second language acquisition (Hamra & Syatriana, 2015; Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; VanPatten, Keating & Wulff, 2020). In China, English has been learned as a foreign language instead of a second language, because Chinese students just learn English in class and have no chance to speak English outside the classroom. English language learning in China is very different from that in many other English-speaking countries like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore where students can learn and use English in the good linguistic context. Thus, translation has become an inalienable part of students' English language

learning in China.

In this context, translation, as an important language skill, has gradually attracted the attention of researchers and educators. Translation is a linguistic and mental activity that has existed in human society for thousands of years. Translation, as a scholarly concept, includes various definitions and perspectives depending on different theoretical approaches. According to Malmkjær (2022), translation is an activity that aims at conveying meaning or meanings of a given linguistic discourse from one language to another. Functionally, translation is viewed as the transfer of meaning from a source language to a target language, emphasizing the purpose of the translation within the target culture and prioritizing the function and intended effect of the translated text over strict adherence to the source text (Wang, 2018). The source language is the language from which another language is translated, while the target language is the language into which another language is translated (Hatim & Munday, 2019). Culturally, translation is regarded not merely as a linguistic transfer but also as a negotiation between cultures, highlighting the translator's role in mediating cultural differences and creating a dialogue between the source and target texts (Ma'shumah, 2021). Post-colonially, translation, focusing on the creative aspect of translation, is seen as an act of rewriting that liberates the text from its original cultural and linguistic confines, underlying the translator's agency and the transformative potential of translation (Kwok, 2020).

Generally, the study of translation in China is mainly about translation theory and practice, rather than translation as a language learning strategy. Most scholars or researchers primarily prefer studying the pure translation methods or the pertinent theories, which lacks the focus on the relationship between translation and English language learning (Liu & Liu, 2014; Munday, 2016; House, 2017; Yao, 2018). But

translation in this research is studied as a language learning strategy, which is a term that refers to the conscious actions that language learners take to help them learn or use the language more effectively (Rose, 2015). Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study university students' translation strategies in English language learning in China.

Translation strategies are mainly about the strategies students have about one language translated into another as a basis for them to comprehend, retain or produce another language, for example, using Chinese-English translation to help learn, understand and use English language. They are not translation methods or approaches used by translators to render text from a source language into a target language while preserving meaning, style, tone, and context. Translation strategies in English language learning are methods and techniques used to help learners understand and use English language effectively. Translation strategies can vary based on the learners' proficiency levels, the specific learning goals, and the context of learning. Translation strategies can be used alone or in combination, depending on the learner's learning needs and learning environment. Effective translation strategies help learners bridge the gap between mother tongue and target language, promote students' deeper understanding of English language and achieve more effective communication. Gündüz et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of context, semantics, and task-oriented communications, indicating that integrating context and semantics into translation strategies can help learners understand the nuances of the English language and effectively communicate in different contexts. Further, Zhu et al. (2023) implied that transfer learning techniques could be applied to translation strategies in English language learning to facilitate knowledge transfer from learners' mother tongue to the target language, thereby improving language comprehension and usage.

While the existing researches offered valuable insights into translation strategies used in English language learning, the research gaps warrant further investigation. First of all, whether translation strategies in English language learning are affected by students' age, gender, major and type of university and what's the difference among them still need further research. Moreover, it is also important for Chinese university students to know which translation strategies can be used to promote their English language learning, such as bidirectional translation, English-Chinese translation, or Chinese-English translation, compared with avoiding the use of translation strategies. Finally, it is also very necessary and significant to study current situation where Chinese students use translation to assist themselves in English learning so as to propose a TELLP for improving the quality and effectiveness of English language learning. Therefore, these are exactly the research problems to be solved in this study, where quantitative data are collected from the reliable questionnaire survey, and the result and discussion are analyzed descriptively based on support from related literatures, involving the use of statistical *t*-test and Spearman correlation analysis.

Overall, the study of translation strategies used by Chinese university students in English language learning will not only help improve their English language ability, but also enhance their cross-cultural bilingual communication ability and personal comprehensive quality. At the same time, this kind of research can also provide valuable theoretical basis and

practical guidance for English language teaching in Chinese colleges and universities, so as to promote the development and progress of English education in China.

2. Objectives of the Study

In general, this research aims to study university students' English language learning in China, exploring the quality and effectiveness of their English language learning from the perspective of translation strategies to propose a more effective English learning program-TELLP.

To be specific, the research is intended to describe the demographics and individual information of 500 students from 6 universities in China, in terms of age, sex, major and type of university; to assess university students' English language learning in relation to translation strategies in terms of bidirectional translation, translation from Chinese to English, translation from English to Chinese, and avoiding the use of translation strategies; to test the significant difference in responses when grouped according to translation strategies; to propose a more effective English learning program-TELLP to improve university students' English language learning in China.

3. A Related Review of Translation Strategies

Translation strategies have been studied in order to produce better translated works or realize a better effect on language teaching and learning. In other words, translation strategies can be regarded both as pure strategies or methods for translation itself and as strategies for language learning. Translation strategies refer to various methods and techniques adopted by translators to achieve equivalent communication between source language and target language in the process of translation. Translation strategies involve not only language conversion, but also cultural and contextual adaptation and adjustment. Coster and Mancini (2015) focused on the translation and cross-cultural adaptation of instruments for occupational therapy research and practice, highlighting the importance of standardized methods for translation and adaptation to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment instruments across different cultural contexts. There were also studies proposing methods to improve the quality of sentence translation and alignment of individual source words with target words, pointing to the potential for future research in enhancing translation strategies for neural machine translation (Braun et al., 2018; Marzuki et al., 2018). Moreover, Alexander et al. (2017) examined design preferences in website translation across different cultural groups, including Chinese preferences, which touched on the cultural aspects of translation, pointing to the potential influence of cultural factors on translation strategies in China. Although studies have shown that translation strategies in the traditional sense can also indirectly promote learners' language learning, many researchers still focus on translation as a direct language learning strategy.

As for translation learning strategies, they are used to transfer the meaning and convey the message, and they are also the methods or approaches to learn a second or foreign language. In China, the study of translation strategies is ubiquitous in educational circles and investigated from various aspects. Qiu (2018) assumed that different strategies have a direct impact on the translator's creation and text selection. Reception aesthetics is one of aesthetic theories and

schools, which emphasizes reader participation. Based on the theory of reception aesthetics, this paper discusses the selection of translation strategies from the perspective of readers' expectations and aesthetic distance. Based on the perspective of "creative treason", Li and Liu (2018) discussed the translation strategies adopted in the German translation of "Brothers" from an angle of language, society, and religiously culture-loaded words. Yan (2018) pointed out that information intention and cognitive environment are the two major factors that restrict the translator's choice of translation strategy. Also, she evaluated the translator's choice of translation strategy and showed that the translator's choice of translation strategy is appropriate and effective, because the translation can enable the Chinese audience to obtain sufficient contextual effects after effective cognitive efforts. Sun (2019) explored the integration and similarities and differences of "head/ head + noun" compound words in English and Chinese from the perspective of metaphor and metonymy, and summarized the translation strategies of such compound words in English and Chinese from the perspective of literal translation and free translation. There are four ways to integrate these compound words in English and Chinese: basic sense + basic sense type, metaphorical meaning + basic meaning type, metonymy + basic semantic type, and multiple occurrence of metaphor-metonymy. English-Chinese translation strategies can be classified into the following three categories: full literal translation, blend of literal translation and free translation, and full free translation. On the basis of analyzing the characteristics of audit English in the new era, Li (2019) put forward some translation strategies for audit English, which can provide effective reference for audit English translation to break down international barriers, for example, precise wording, logical expression, exact connotation, and simplified sentence structure. Zhou (2016) analyzed the strategies and methods for translating English Idioms from cultural perspective. She noticed that, under the influence of such various cultural aspects as geography, custom, literary tradition, religious belief etc., English idiom and Chinese idiom own different implication-matched pattern, which could be divided into three patterns: basically matched, partially matched and incompletely-matched. On the contrary, Deng (2020) gave an analysis of English translation strategies for government work reports in terms of literal translation, interpretation, addition, omission, substitution and recombination. Similarly, Shi (2020) presented the translation strategies of tourism publicity materials from the perspective of communication without mentioning cultural factors. Literal translation, free translation and information deletion are common translation strategies for the promotion of tourism. There is no connection with cultural aspects involved in the study of strategies adopted in translation. However, there are also some researchers who studied the translation strategies for language teaching and learning.

Although artificial intelligence translation technology has been widely used in foreign language learning, Zheng et al. (2023) assumed that few studies have focused on its impact on foreign language learning strategies and effects, especially in foreign language writing. Their study adopts the research methods of quantitative research and controlled experiment, and the results show that the technology has a positive effect on the foreign language learning strategies and results of college students, especially in writing, except for some drawbacks. For the better use of machine translation technology in teaching and learning, Li (2022) discussed the

teaching strategies for the teachers and the autonomous learning strategies for the learners with machine translation technology. With the help of a good machine translation software/system, different groups with different teaching strategies show students' different language competence. Based on the study, language learners can appropriately use machine translation to improve their basic skills in English, including reading, writing and vocabulary. The most important thing for college students in English learning is English translation strategy. Wang (2016) made a brief analysis of translation learning strategies for English majors and analyzed English translation learning to discuss whether the application of translation strategies can affect the overall level of English learning. At the same time, she also put forward effective methods for the application of translation learning strategies influenced by English level, and then conducted relevant studies and confirms the influence of translation strategies on learning results. Tan (2016) explored the level of translation learning strategies that the translation majors used in the same grade and among the different grades with the questionnaire method, interview method and case study. The results were discussed from the perspectives of the theory of translation learning strategies and translation competence.

In the west, the research to date has explored language learning strategies in relation to translation. According to Cohen (2014), thoughts and actions consciously chosen and operationalized by language learners assist learners in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance. It is well known that language learning strategies have extensively been investigated due to their facilitating role in learning a foreign language. Specifically, language learning strategies can help learners to enhance learning, to solve specific problems, to make learning easier, faster and enjoyable, and to compensate a deficit in learning (Cohen & Macaro, 2013). However, using a single language learning strategies may not be effective in foreign language learning, whereas deployment of several strategies may be more beneficial for language learners (Cohen, 2014).

Apart from the translation methods above, most language teaching methods have discouraged the learners from using native language in the classroom. In contrast, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching Method encouraged teachers to use the target language for various purposes: communicative activities, explanations and homework assignment (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Additionally, Cohen (2014) presented a more or less different classification of language learning strategies in terms of function (cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies), technical aspect (learning and use of vocabulary, grammar, and translation), age, level of proficiency, gender, and specific language or culture. Translation language learning strategies are amongst the most common strategies that have an important role in linguistic education. These strategies promote the process of language learning because they are conducive to the formation and consolidation of the relationship or connection between their first and second languages. On balance, most scholars are concerned with how to translate one language into another, instead of how to employ translation as a strategy for learning English language. Despite some researchers' study on the importance of translation strategies in English language teaching and

learning, few of them have probed into the relationship between translation strategies and language learning.

In conclusion, there are a great many researchers and scholars who have studied translation, translation strategies, and English language learning from various perspectives. What they did in this area is of great significance to those who want to continue this area of study in the future. Nonetheless, few of them are concerned with the study of university students' English language learning in China in terms of translation strategies in a descriptive and correlational way, with a view to forming a more effective English learning program-TELLP.

4. Methods

4.1. Research Design

The objective of this research is to explore the impact of translation strategies on university students' English language learning as well as the difference in translation strategies when grouped according to the profile. A quantitative research design of descriptive and correlational methods was preferentially used. According to Watson (2015), quantitative research encompasses a range of methods concerned with the systematic investigation of social phenomena, using statistical or numerical data. Therefore, quantitative research involves measurement and assumes that the phenomenon under study can be measured. The descriptive method was adopted to describe how Chinese university students learn English using translation strategies, and this method involved an analysis and interpretation of translation strategies when grouped according to the profile.

4.2. Participants

The participants involved in the study mainly come from six public or private universities in China. There are 500 university students randomly selected as the respondents and divided into two groups: English majors and non-English majors. The respondents in the study, including the total population of students, have the basic experience of learning English, or having learned English language using translation in the past few years. All respondents have to participate in a questionnaire survey of their demographics, individual backgrounds as well as translation strategies in relation to English language learning.

4.3. Data Gathering Procedure

With regard to the data collection, questionnaires were handed out via the internet App-“Wenjuanxing” with an English name of “Sojump” or “Questionnaire Star”, which is a professional online survey, assessment and voting platform.

Firstly, 500 Chinese students were required to be selected randomly from six undergraduate universities in China to participate in this questionnaire survey. The minimum requirement is that all students must be able to complete the questionnaire independently when they are still enrolled at university, regardless of their sex, age, majors, year level, and type of university.

Then, the questionnaires were sent to them in the form of a QR code and the specific purpose of the questionnaire was explained to them in detail. The questionnaires sent to my own university will be done personally, while the questionnaires sent to other universities will be processed by teachers being commissioned, who have many years of rich teaching experience at university.

Moreover, the English teacher whom I had commissioned to distribute the questionnaires further clarified the purpose, function and approximate quantity of the questionnaire to the respondents, and explained the content of the questionnaires to the participants in the simplest way so as to ensure the accuracy of their answers to the questions.

In this survey, there is a minimum request for plenty of patience on the part of students due to the large number of questions being asked. Therefore, it is ideally assumed that all students being interviewed should be able to cope seriously with the questionnaire, thus producing a more effective outcome of investigation. After receiving the QR code, students who were willing to participate in the survey with keen interest could directly scan the QR code on WeChat to get the link and answer the multiple-choice questions on their mobile phones. Once the questionnaire was completed and submitted, the participants subsequently received certain rewards in the form of virtual currency to ensure the quantity and quality of the feedback on it.

The maximum number of questionnaires was set up to 500. When the number came to the upper limit, the system would prompt the questionnaire distributors to gather data in time. Then the data were collected, and finally the methods of frequency counting, percentage, ranking and weighted average were used for statistical processing. In the meantime, SPSS 27.0 software was utilized to explain, analyze and compare the participants' answers to the questionnaire survey.

4.4. Data Analysis

Initially, the data were gathered from the questionnaire and then computed and tabulated. Next, the weighted mean was used to investigate the circumstance and probability of using translation strategies to learn English. To expound the Likert scale, the verbal interpretation of translation strategies was ranged as follows: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always, 2.50 – 3.49 = Often, 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes, and 1.00 - 1.49 = Never.

Besides, a statistical test was employed to explain the difference of responses when grouped based on profile. This statistical test is called a t-test, according to Bevans (2022), which is used to compare the means of two groups, and often used in hypothesis testing to determine whether a treatment or process actually has an impact on the population of interest. After the statistical processing and treatment, the data results were described, analyzed and interpreted. Finally, by virtue of further analysis and discussion, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were offered for reference in the future research.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the principle of mutual respect, all participants participated in this study on the basis of mutual consent. No one was obliged to cooperate with the author throughout the research. Moreover, the topic selection, proposal plan, theoretical analysis, questionnaire design in this research were all based on scientific guidance from the professors at Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas, and all relevant data were scientifically collected and sorted through proper and legal procedures.

Meanwhile, anyone who had taken part in this questionnaire received a certain amount of money in the form of red envelope through WeChat so that all respondents could take it seriously and the most authentic and reliable data could be gathered successfully.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Translation Strategies as to Strategies for translation from Chinese to English

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. To write in English, I first brainstorm about the topic in Chinese.	3.44	Often	7
2. If I forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of conversation, I translate from Chinese into English to help me keep the conversation going.	3.47	Often	4
3. When I write in English, I first think in Chinese and then translate my ideas into English.	3.47	Often	3
4. I write Chinese outlines for my English compositions.	3.49	Often	2
5. When I watch TV shows or movies in English, I use Chinese subtitles to check my comprehension.	3.41	Often	8
6. I listen to or read Chinese news first in order to understand English radio/TV news better.	3.37	Often	9
7. When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Chinese and then translate it into English.	3.45	Often	5.5
8. I use Chinese-English dictionaries to help myself learn English.	3.36	Often	10
9. I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Chinese to English in various situations.	3.45	Often	5.5
10. I ask questions about how a Chinese expression can be translated into English.	3.50	Often	1
11. I take notes in Chinese in my English class.	3.30	Often	11
Composite Mean	3.43	Often	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

Table 1 represents the participants' evaluation on the strategies for translation from Chinese to English needed for English learning. The composite means of 3.43 shows that they often use these translation strategies in general. Among these indicators, the indicator 10 "I ask questions about how a Chinese expression can be translated into English" received the highest score of 3.50, followed by the indicator 4 "I write Chinese outlines for my English compositions (3.49)."

The result indicates that respondents often lean English language by using translation strategies in terms of asking questions about Chinese-English translation and writing Chinese outlines for English compositions. Using these translation strategies has a positive effect on students' English language learning.

The top-ranked indicator 10 shows that students often ask about how a Chinese expression can be translated into English when using translation strategies to learn English. This strategy is most favored by students may be due to their interest in the nuances and connotations of words and expressions that are not fully captured by dictionaries or basic translations. They ask for translations to gain a deeper understanding of the subtleties of English usage, which helps them use the language more effectively and naturally. The study by Wei and Zhou (2021) illustrated that this translation strategy is effective for vocabulary learning, particularly in helping learners grasp the nuances of similar expressions across languages. Their research shows that students who regularly engage in this type of translation exercise have a better understanding of how words and expressions are used in specific contexts in English. Another reason is that the structural differences between English and Chinese bring challenges to translation. Chinese is a tonal language, and its syntax and grammar systems are different from English.

English has no tones and follows the subject-verb-object order. Students often ask the Chinese-English translation questions so as to better understand these structural differences and how they affect the meaning of the two languages. According to Maulidiyah and Garnida (2021), the up-ranking of the source language structure in the translation process has been highlighted in the context of language learning and teaching, which emphasized the importance of understanding the structure and nuances of the source language when translating into English, which aligns with the interest in translation strategies used to learn English among students.

The second-ranked indicator 4 shows that respondents often use translation strategies to lean English through writing Chinese outlines for English compositions. Making an outline in Chinese before starting English writing enables students to organize and convey their ideas and concepts clearly and accurately in their native language. This familiarity can reduce their cognitive load, making it easier for them to focus on structure and content before dealing with the additional challenge of expressing ideas in English. At the same time, this can better control the accuracy of the output language, reducing the possibility of misunderstanding or unclear expression. According to Liu and Yeung (2023), the use of Chinese outline in English compositions can effectively help organize thoughts and improve the clarity and accuracy of language output. Their study also showed that using the mother tongue in planning can improve the quality of the second language production by providing cognitive support and reducing language stress. Moreover, learning English through this translation strategy is also a cognitive process. By translating from Chinese to English in essay writing, learners actively compare the language structure between the two languages, which can improve their comprehension and

fluency over time. According to Yu (2021), the cognitive processes involved in translation can be beneficial for language learning. Specifically, translating from one's native language to a foreign language requires engagement with two languages' structures, enhancing comprehension and fluency over time. Cognitive process in translation is beneficial to the development of problem-solving ability and understanding semantic differences between different languages, which can help improve language proficiency and cognitive flexibility.

However, the indicator 8 "I use Chinese-English dictionaries to help myself learn English (3.36)" and the indicator 11 "I take notes in Chinese in my English class (3.30)" are all evaluated at a very low level. The result shows that not so many respondents often learn English language by using translation strategies in terms of using Chinese-English dictionaries and taking notes in Chinese in English class. Using these translation strategies has a less effect on students' English language learning.

For the indicator 8, while dictionaries are basic tools that can be used as strategies in translation for English learning, their low ranking could be due to the extensive use of machine translation, or the emergence of more interactive and immersive learning tools like language learning apps, or the fact that people prefer to learn from context rather than direct translation. Tu et al. (2017) discussed the use of context gates for neural machine translation, showing the significance of context in language processing and learning, and suggesting that learners may be more inclined to utilize context-based

learning methods that could diminish their reliance on dictionaries for direct translation in English learning. Similarly, there was also a support from the study by Kohnke and Moorhouse (2022) who explored the facilitation of synchronous online language learning through Zoom, highlighting the increasing role of digital platforms in language education. In addition, using dictionary as a translation strategy to learn English is easy for students to depend on it, and an overuse of it may have a certain negative effect on the target language learning. According to Fareed et al. (2016), over-reliance on or overuse of dictionaries can hinder learners' ability to develop the ability to infer meaning from context or practice memorizing known words.

As to the bottom-ranked indicator 11, it shows that taking notes in Chinese might be seen as the less effective strategy for English learning through translation, even though some students still often do that in class. For some students, this strategy may minimize their immersion in the target language. Students who want to fully immerse themselves in English may decide that taking notes in English is a better way to enhance English language learning and memorization than memorizing through a Chinese translation. The study by Hu and Luo (2024) suggested that metacognitive strategies, such as direct engagement with the language through note-taking in English, promote deeper cognitive processing and understanding, leading to better vocabulary retention and language learning results.

Table 2. Translation Strategies as to Strategies for translation from English to Chinese

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. When reading an English text, I first translate it into Chinese in my mind to help me understand its meaning.	3.27	Often	9
2. I memorize the meaning of new English vocabulary words by remembering their Chinese translation.	3.31	Often	7
3. I learn English grammar through Chinese explanations of the English grammatical rules.	3.41	Often	1
4. I use Chinese translation of grammatical terms such as parts of speech, tenses, and agreements to help me clarify the roles of the grammatical parts of English sentences.	3.38	Often	3
5. I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Chinese translation.	3.34	Often	5
6. I use English-Chinese dictionaries to help myself learn English.	3.35	Often	4
7. I read the Chinese translation scripts before I listen to instructional English audios or videos.	3.20	Often	12
8. After doing English reading comprehension, I use the Chinese translation available to check if my understanding is correct.	3.24	Often	10
9. If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Chinese for me.	3.24	Often	11
10. When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them into Chinese.	2.97	Often	13
11. When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Chinese to help me understand the meanings.	3.27	Often	8
12. I translate English articles in the textbook into Chinese so that I can understand it better.	3.32	Often	6
13. I write Chinese translations in my English textbooks.	3.40	Often	2
Composite Mean	3.28	Often	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

Table 2 depicts the respondents' assessment on the strategies for translation from English to Chinese required for

English learning. The composite mean of 3.28 shows that they often use these translation strategies generally. Among these

indicators, the indicator 3 “I learn English grammar through Chinese explanations of the English grammatical rules” got the highest score of 3.41, followed by the indicator 13 “I write Chinese translations in my English textbooks (3.40).”

The result shows that most respondents often use translation strategies for learning English grammar through Chinese explanations, writing Chinese translations in English textbooks, and translating English grammatical terms into Chinese to clarify English sentences, which are rated very high for their great importance in English learning through translation.

The indicator 3 demonstrates that this strategy is most frequently used among students, suggesting their strong dependence on native language to grasp English grammatical rules. Students are more likely to use their familiar mother tongue to help them understand new language concepts. Mother tongue, as their first language, has a profound language foundation and psychological dependence. Therefore, the interpretation of English grammar rules through Chinese can reduce the difficulty of understanding English and make it easier for students to accept and master the target language. Richardson et al. (2020) emphasized the profound language foundation and psychological dependence that individuals have on their first language. This dependency suggested that using the mother tongue to interpret English grammar rules may reduce the difficulty in understanding English language. Another reason is that this translation strategy takes advantage of the language transfer effect, that is, the transfer of language knowledge from the target language to their mother tongue. As students think and communicate mainly in Chinese in their daily life, they will naturally use the existing linguistic knowledge in their mother tongue as a bridge when learning English grammar rules. This transfer effect helps students to compare and relate complex English grammar rules with Chinese grammatical structures, thus deepening their understanding of the target rules (Luu et al., 2016; Liang & Yan, 2019).

The indicator 13, with a weighted mean very close to the top-ranked indicator, shows that students also frequently write Chinese translations in English textbooks when learning English. On the one hand, Chinese translation helps students understand and remember the meaning of English words and sentences, especially for those difficult words and grammatical structures. By comparing Chinese and English, students can understand the usage and meaning of English more clearly. Some studies have underscored the potential benefits of using Chinese translations in English textbooks, particularly in aiding students’ understanding and retention of English words and sentences, particularly for difficult words and grammatical structures (Wong & Looi, 2010; Tsai, 2022). On the other hand, it is very helpful for vocabulary accumulation. Writing down Chinese translations can help students build vocabulary. Whenever they see an English word, students can quickly recall the meaning of the word by looking at the Chinese translation on the side, thus strengthening their vocabulary memory. According to Fan (2020), the study of vocabulary learning strategies for Chinese English students suggests that strategies like translation are part of a broader set of effective ways of English learning. These strategies can help learners improve the breadth and depth of their vocabulary knowledge, suggesting that translation can serve as a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition.

However, the indicator 7 “I read the Chinese translation

scripts before I listen to instructional English audios or videos (3.24)” and the indicator 10 “When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them into Chinese (2.97)” are rated lower.

The result indicates that while these low-rated indicators are still within the “often” category, respondents less frequently use the translation strategies as to reading Chinese translations before engaging with English audio-visual materials, and collaboratively translating English texts into Chinese. Also, it shows the weak function of these translation strategies in Chinese students’ English learning.

The indicator 7 demonstrates that students less frequently read Chinese translations before engaging with English audio-visual materials. The second-to-last ranking of this strategy may indicate that students prefer direct exposure to English materials to improve their English listening skills. This heralds a potential shift towards immersive learning strategies, in which students attempt to understand English directly in English, without the need to translate the target language into their native language, which conforms to immersive language acquisition theories that emphasize the benefits of direct exposure to the target language. The study by Callahan and Shifrer (2016) emphasized the importance of equitable access to immersive learning opportunities that English learners should have. Furthermore, Parong and Mayer (2018) assumed that immersive virtual reality can enhance learning ability by providing learners with direct exposure to the subject matter.

The indicator 10 indicates that collaboratively translating English texts into Chinese is the least used strategy in English learning though this translation strategy still falls within the “often” category. The fact that this strategy is used least frequently by students among all translation strategies may be due to the collaborative nature of the task. Compared with individual strategies, such learning strategies require more coordination and joint efforts. Students may find that relying on individual translation knowledge and techniques is more effective than working with a partner, which will take more time to achieve the specific goal of English learning. Additionally, personal selection of translation strategies for English learning may better adapt to personal learning progress and preferences. Kharb et al. (2013) found that individual learning styles significantly influence the choice of learning strategies among students, suggesting that individualized learning approaches are important for accommodating different learning preferences and progress.

Table 3 portrays the respondents’ evaluation on bidirectional translation used as the strategies for English learning. The composite mean of 3.38 indicates that they often use these translation strategies to learn English. Among these items, the indicator 5 “Bidirectional translation helps me enhance communication abilities in both languages” received the highest score of 3.41, followed by the indicator 4 “Bidirectional translation facilitates cultural understanding and appreciation in both languages (3.39).” The result indicates that students often use these bidirectional translation strategies in English learning to enhance communication abilities and facilitate cultural understanding.

This indicator 5 shows that Chinese students frequently use bidirectional translation to enhance their communication abilities in both languages. Students’ use of bidirectional translation strategies in English learning may improve their reading ability, writing ability and speaking ability.

Table 3. Translation Strategies as to Strategies for bidirectional translation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I try to clarify the differences between Chinese and English through translation.	3.38	Often	3.5
2. I try to clarify the similarities between Chinese and English through translation.	3.36	Often	5
3. Bidirectional translation helps with understanding grammar and vocabulary in both languages.	3.38	Often	3.5
4. Bidirectional translation facilitates cultural understanding and appreciation in both languages.	3.39	Often	2
5. Bidirectional translation helps me enhance communication abilities in both languages.	3.41	Often	1
Composite Mean	3.38	Often	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

This is because switching between Chinese and English in the mind can help learners to improve their cognition of the two languages and help them understand different language characteristics better, achieving the goal of accurate use of language. According to Xu et al. (2019), bidirectional translation strategies not only required students to understand the content of the source language, but also required them to accurately express it in the target language. This process can improve students' reading comprehension and written expression skills. Fang et al. (2017) discussed the potential of bidirectional translation in enabling word and sentence-level sign language translation. In oral communication, this translation strategy can also help students understand each other's meaning more accurately and respond with appropriate language.

The indicator 4 shows that bidirectional translation strategies have played an important role in the facilitation of cultural understanding in English learning. Cultural understanding is another important benefit of bidirectional translation. By translating culturally relevant content such as literature, idioms or historical texts back and forth between Chinese and English, learners gain insight into the cultural context and values of both languages. For example, it is more helpful to understand the meaning and usage of an English idiom by converting it into an equivalent Chinese idiom and then interpreting the corresponding English idiom based on a Chinese idiom translation. Li (2010) highlighted the importance of bidirectional translation in virtual knowledge sharing in a cross-cultural context. The study also emphasized that bidirectional translation serves as a vital tool for bridging cultural gaps, enabling individuals to understand and

appreciate diverse cultural perspectives. Moreover, Chen & Yang (2016) emphasized the role of bidirectional translation in promoting cross-cultural understanding and language use in research-oriented Internet-mediated intercultural exchange.

However, the indicator 2 “I try to clarify the similarities between Chinese and English through translation” is the only item with a lower weighted mean of 3.36. The result shows that students cannot use bidirectional translation to clarify and understand the similarities between Chinese and English in language learning, while they still often do that in their English study.

Recognizing the similarities between two languages can make learning the target language easier and can also improve the accuracy of translation to some extent. However, the differences between languages in most cases exceed their similarities, which can be illustrated by Sennrich et al. (2015) who assumed that the differences between languages often outweigh their similarities, posing challenges for language learners. Their study also showed that the structural disparities between the two languages can hinder effective bidirectional translation and language learning for Chinese students. In particular, Chinese and English are very different in grammatical structure, vocabulary, tense and so on. When the structure of the two languages is too different to express the really intended meanings, Chinese students may not be able to learn English effectively through bidirectional translation. This can be supported by Zhang et al. (2019) who argued that the grammatical structures and vocabulary of Chinese and English are significantly different, making it challenging for Chinese students to effectively learn English through bidirectional translation.

Table 4. Translation Strategies as to Avoiding using translation strategies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. When speaking English, I think of what I want to say in English without thinking first in Chinese.	2.81	Often	1
2. I focus on understanding the context and meaning of the message rather than trying to find equivalents in another language.	2.78	Often	2.5
3. I surround myself with the target language as much as possible through media, conversations, and other immersive experiences.	2.78	Often	2.5
Composite Mean	2.79	Often	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

Table 4 describes the respondents' assessment on avoiding using translation strategies in English language learning. The composite mean arrives at 2.79, which suggests that they often avoid using translation strategies in general. Among the three indicators, the indicator 1 "When speaking English, I think of what I want to say in English without thinking first in Chinese" received the highest score of 2.81, followed by the indicator 2 "I focus on understanding the context and meaning of the message rather than trying to find equivalents in another language (2.78)" and the indicator 3 "I surround myself with the target language as much as possible through media, conversations, and other immersive experiences (2.78)," which all have a weighted mean falling within the "Often" category (2.50 – 3.49). The result shows that students frequently avoid using translation strategies in terms of thinking in English, understanding context and meaning, and immersive experiences.

The top-ranked indicator 1 demonstrates that the strategy students frequently used was to think directly in English rather than translate from Chinese, which implies that participants regularly practice expressing ideas directly in the target language, a key step in achieving accurate and fluent language expression and reducing reliance on translation. A person who often thinks in English may skip the thinking step of translation, thus achieving communication and interaction more quickly and accurately. For example, instead of thinking "我要坐飞机" in Chinese and then translating it into "I'm taking a plane," some students will think directly about the thinking patterns and habits of this expression in English, rather than thinking from the Chinese habits and patterns of thinking and expressing. Sharpen (2016) investigated the first

language conceptual transfer in the acquisition of the second language motion events, emphasizing the thinking-for-speaking hypothesis, which suggests that thinking patterns and habits from the first language may impact language expression and communication in the second language. In other words, this hypothesis may show the negative impact of translation on linguistic expression and oral communication in the target language, and illustrate the benefit of learning English through thinking in English.

The indicator 2, being tied for the second rank, shows that students often avoid using translation strategies in terms of understanding context and meaning. This strategy highlights the importance of grasping the overall context and meaning in English learning, rather than mastering English through word-for-word translation. Paying attention to context and meaning can not only help learners to understand the language more intuitively and make communication more smooth and natural, but also help to understand idiomatic expressions and cultural differences in different languages. For example, when students literally translate "It's raining cats and dogs," they can't really understand the intended meaning, but when they focus on and understand the context of the sentence, they can accurately convey the exact meaning of "It's raining very heavily." Conneau et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of supervised learning of universal sentence representations from natural language inference data. This research finding is particularly pertinent to strategies for mastering global context and meaning in English learning, since it provides a framework for learners to develop universal representations of sentences that capture contextual and meaning aspects of language use.

Table 5. Difference of Responses on Translation Strategies When Grouped According to Profile

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Strategies for translation from Chinese to English	0.422	0.516	Not Significant
Strategies for translation from English to Chinese	0.141	0.707	Not Significant
Strategies for bidirectional translation	0.029	0.864	Not Significant
Avoiding using translation strategies	1.349	0.246	Not Significant
Age			
Strategies for translation from Chinese to English	0.853	0.465	Not Significant
Strategies for translation from English to Chinese	0.554	0.646	Not Significant
Strategies for bidirectional translation	0.559	0.642	Not Significant
Avoiding using translation strategies	3.410	0.017	Significant
Major			
Strategies for translation from Chinese to English	0.011	0.916	Not Significant
Strategies for translation from English to Chinese	0.383	0.536	Not Significant
Strategies for bidirectional translation	2.378	0.124	Not Significant
Avoiding using translation strategies	0.619	0.432	Not Significant
Type of University			
Strategies for translation from Chinese to English	0.201	0.654	Not Significant
Strategies for translation from English to Chinese	1.400	0.237	Not Significant
Strategies for bidirectional translation	0.218	0.641	Not Significant
Avoiding using translation strategies	0.329	0.566	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Also tied for the second rank, the indicator 3 demonstrates that some students still frequently avoid using translation to learn English. Instead, they will choose this learning strategy of immersing themselves in the target language through various means such as media and conversation. This weighted average manifests the effectiveness of creating a learning

environment where the target language is frequently encountered, which contributes to natural language acquisition. Involving in English media, such as watching movies or reading English books, can provide an appropriate context for English learning; for example, watching English movies and TV programs often helps to improve students'

spoken English proficiency and English listening ability. In other words, students put more emphasis on the importance of immersive experiences with English learning than on that of adopting translation for language learning. Cervantes-Soon (2014) provided a critical look at dual language immersion programs, which are designed to help students become proficient in two languages. This study is just relevant because it explores the effectiveness of immersive language learning experiences and reveals the potential benefits of avoiding translation in language learning. Furthermore, the study by De Wilde et al. (2020) also suggests that exposure to

authentic English language use in media, or immersing oneself to English media like movies and TV, can contribute to language learning and development.

Table 5 shows the comparison of responses on translation strategies when grouped according to profile. It was observed that there was significant difference on avoiding using translation strategies when grouped according to age because the obtained p-value of 0.017 was less than the alpha level. This indicates that the responses differ significantly and based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who are 18 to 19 years old have better assessment than others.

Table 6. Translation-based English Language Learning Program

Key Result Area	Projects	Strategies/ Activities	Success Indicators	Persons Involved
Translation Strategies as to Strategies for translation from Chinese to English	Seminar on Chinese and English radio/TV news	1. Help students overcome the issue of language barriers 2. Prepare Chinese materials before immersing themselves in English radio and TV.	Students can develop a good habit of translating before listening to the radio and watching TV in English learning.	Students/ teachers/ multimedia classroom
	Seminar on Chinese-English dictionaries in English learning	1. Encourage students to use dictionary while using machine translation or other language learning apps. 2. Show students the advantages of English dictionary.	Students are willing to use English dictionary while translating in English learning.	
	Seminar on taking Chinese notes in English class	1. Teach students to take Chinese notes in a right way. 2. Verify students' Chinese notes taken by translation in English learning.	Students can find the effect of notetaking through translation on the improvement of English learning.	
Translation Strategies as to Strategies for translation from English to Chinese	Seminar on translating in interaction	1. Reduce students' reliance on using a dictionary or other resources to translate by themselves. 2. Encourage students to communicate with other through different translations.	Students are willing to seek help from others to translate English into Chinese if they do not understand something in English learning	Students/ teachers/ multimedia classroom
	Seminar on how to deal with the instructional English audios or videos	1. Prepare enough materials relating to the audios or videos before listening to English. 2. Encourage students to use translation to learn English in audios or videos.	Students more frequently read Chinese translations before engaging with English audio-visual materials.	
	Seminar on translating when English assignments are handed out	1. Provide students more opportunities for coordination and joint efforts in translation to learn English. 2. Encourage students to collaborate with one another in finishing their tasks through translation.	Students are able to complete their English assignments given by teachers through collaborative translation.	
Translation Strategies as to Strategies for bidirectional translation	Seminar on how to clarify the similarities between Chinese and English through translation	1. Guide students to use bidirectional translation to clarify and understand the similarities between Chinese and English in language learning 2. Discuss and analyze part of speech, tense, voice and sentence structure in both languages through comparison and contrast.	Students are able to find the similarities between English and Chinese so that they can learn English better through translation.	Students/ teachers/ multimedia classroom
Translation Strategies as to Avoiding using translation strategies	Seminar on avoiding the use of translation strategies	Compare and contrast learning strategy of immersing themselves in English through various means such as media and conversation with the use of translation skills and strategies to learn English language.	Part of the students is willing to immerse themselves in English learning, instead of depending on translation.	Students/ teachers/ multimedia classroom

The result shows a significant difference among age groups regarding the avoidance of using translation strategies. This

suggests that age ranging from 18 to 19 influences the likelihood of avoiding using translation strategies to learn English at university. For example, the youngest students may be more open to experimenting with different learning strategies rather than translation strategies only, while older students might prefer traditional translation strategies for English learning.

The reasons why students of this age group consent to avoiding the use of translation strategies in English learning may come from the following two factors. On one hand, they believe that English language acquisition is a natural process. Learning through direct exposure to or contact with and use of the target language (English) is more effective than translating through the mother tongue (Chinese). This immersive approach to language learning can help students master the use of language in a more natural way. The study by Wang et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of understanding natural language in the learning process, indicating that learning through direct exposure to the target language is helpful to natural language understanding. Furthermore, Hamilton et al. (2021) conducted a systematic literature review of immersive virtual reality as a pedagogical tool in education, indicating that the immersive nature of the learning environment allows students to engage with the language in a more natural and interactive manner, potentially enhancing their language acquisition process.

On the other hand, avoiding the application of translation strategies to English learning may help improve students' language thinking ability. Thinking and expressing directly in English helps to cultivate students' linguistic thinking ability in target language. According to Yao and Ma (2023), if translation strategies are relied on in English learning, students will habitually think about what they want to express in their native language first, and then translate it into English, which will affect their reaction speed and expression ability in actual communication.

About the Translation-based English Language Learning Program.

6. Conclusion

With the result and discussion based on data gathered above, the conclusions are reached as follows. Firstly, the majority of respondents are female students aged 18-19 and 20-21 majoring in English language studies, despite the little difference in their distribution between public and private universities.

Secondly, the respondents aged 18-19 tend to avoid using translation strategies for English learning possibly due to their preference for natural learning and direct thinking in English.

Moreover, respondents frequently use bidirectional translation strategies in English learning for the enhancement of communication abilities and understanding of cultures and words. Besides, students frequently use strategies for translation from English to Chinese to learn English language, for example, English grammar learning through Chinese explanations, written Chinese translations in English textbooks, and English grammatical terms translated into Chinese.

Additionally, strategies for translation from Chinese to English are often used by respondents to learn English in terms of asking questions about Chinese-English translation and writing Chinese outlines for English compositions, though some students still avoid the use of translation strategies in English learning.

Finally, a TELLP is proposed to serve as the guidance for Chinese students' English language learning based on translation strategies.

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