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Applying Blended Teaching and Social Constructivism with L2 Motivational Self System to Enhance Translation Learning

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Abstract

Translation learning poses significant challenges for both students and teachers due to its complexity and high demands on bilingual proficiency. Limited class hours and monotonous teaching methods further aggravate these difficulties. Based on the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), this study explores how students' learning motivation can be utilized to improve translation instruction. Guided by social constructivism theory, a blended translation teaching approach was designed, integrating online resources from platforms such as the Chaoxing learning platform with classroom activities. The study involved one experimental class (EC, n=48) and one control class (CC, n=48), a mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative data analysis via SPSS with qualitative data analysis through thematic analysis. The results revealed improvements in students' translation proficiency and demonstrated how sustained motivation positively influences learning outcomes. By bridging motivational factors with blended pedagogy, this research offers practical insights for translation teaching in Chinese application-oriented universities, it also suggests areas and directions for future study.

Keywords: Blended Teaching, Social Constructivism, L2 Motivational Self System, Translation Competence

Introduction

In the context of English teaching and learning in Chinese universities, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation are recognized as the five essential competencies. Among these, translation refers to the process of accurately and fully conveying the meaning expressed in one language into another, while appropriately reproducing the source text's

content, style, and tone. For this reason, translation is the most comprehensive and challenging language activity among the five skills, so students often feel frustrated or discouraged in the process of learning translation. Traditional teaching methods are insufficient for delivering high-quality translation instruction and meeting students' different learning needs within the limited time available in the offline classroom.

In line with the 2020 Guidelines for Undergraduate Teaching in the Translation Major, contemporary translation education requires a shift in pedagogy towards heuristic, dialogic and participatory approaches. This transformation is based on the idea that translation training should encourage students' all-round development and personal growth by tackling the various complexities and nuances of translation tasks. Adopting a learner-centred approach, the guidelines propose curricula that evolve alongside the discipline's dynamic landscape. These curricula emphasize institutional distinctiveness and integrate professional expertise with practical applications. This approach effectively connects theoretical foundations with industry-relevant competencies (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Therefore, translation educators should tailor their pedagogical approaches based on the distinct talent development programs of each institution and the diverse learning needs of students.

The researcher has taught translation courses at the School of Foreign Languages in Guangdong University of Science and Technology (GUST) for 13 years, this university is a private, application-oriented university, the majority of the university's students come from Guangdong Province. Due to regional and educational factors, students in this province generally demonstrate lower Chinese language proficiency compared to their peers in other provinces. Their English proficiency is also below the national average. This is reflected in the pass rates for the Test for English Majors (TEM-4 and TEM-8) in 2024, where X University recorded rates of 34.27% and 10.25% respectively, which are significantly lower than the national averages of 52.75% and 40.47%. This relatively low level of proficiency in both Chinese and English makes translation instruction particularly challenging. Consequently, students often lack the competence and confidence to attempt the China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI), which is the most important certification in China for assessing translation and interpreting ability.

Traditional face-to-face instruction remains the dominant teaching method for most translation courses. In-person instruction is important because it allows for direct interaction between teachers and students, enables teachers to observe students' performance and provides immediate feedback. However, due to limited class hours, the demanding nature of translation and the theoretical content, relying solely on offline instruction often leads to unsatisfactory teaching and learning results. With the rapid development of modern information technology, learning management platforms and mobile applications, blended online-offline teaching has become a practical solution to issues such as limited classroom time, students' varying learning abilities and the need for personalized learning pathways.

Incorporating social constructivism and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) into blended translation instruction provides significant advantages. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) theory, social constructivism views knowledge as actively constructed through experiential learning, cooperation, and meaningful interaction. Teachers can support students in gradually building translation knowledge and problem-solving skills by providing rich online resources, employing varied offline methods, and using scaffolding and peer collaboration effectively. At the same time, Dörnyei's L2MSS theory links second language learning motivation with learners' self-efficacy, emphasizing the importance of personal initiative, social engagement, and affective as well as psychological processes (Dörnyei, 2009). Subsequent developments of this framework further highlight that learners' self-concept, goals, and beliefs are decisive in shaping their motivation to learn (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). When teachers select translation materials appropriate to students' needs, design curricula that reflect their future professional requirements, and foster an interactive and motivating classroom environment that encourages peer collaboration, students' engagement and motivation in translation learning can be effectively sustained and enhanced.

This study combines social constructivism and L2MSS theory into an online-offline blended teaching approach. This study aims to investigate how a blended teaching approach, grounded in social constructivism and the L2 Motivational Self System, can enhance students' motivation, confidence, and competence in translation.

Blended translation teaching was implemented in one junior-year English major class at GUST, designated as the experimental class (EC), while traditional translation instruction was conducted in another class serving as the control class (CC). The progress of translation competence in both the EC and CC was compared. Following this, the study examined the effectiveness of the instructional intervention as well as the motivational factors influencing students' engagement in translation learning. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following questions:

1. To what extent do students' translation skills develop over time when integrating blended learning and social constructivist approaches with the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in translation instruction?

2. What motivational factors, within the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) framework, influence students' engagement in translation when using blended learning and social constructivist approaches?

To address these questions, this study establishes the following specific research objectives:

1. To examine the trajectory of students' translation proficiency development over a semester when integrating blended learning, social constructivist pedagogy, and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in translation instruction.

2.To identify the specific motivational factors within the L2MSS framework (e.g., Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self) that significantly influence students' engagement in translation tasks when using blended learning and social constructivist approaches.

Literature Review

In the research design of integrating blended learning and social constructivist approaches with the L2MSS in teaching translation, the following principles will be primarily incorporated: students' needs analysis, blended translation pedagogy, social constructivism, and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS).

Needs Analysis

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) classify learning needs into two main categories: target needs and learning needs. Learning must focus on learners' processes and strategies to achieve effective learning outcomes (Hyland, 2019; Long, 2020). In order to achieve the intended teaching objectives, it is crucial to understand the learning needs, lacks and wants of students and to adopt effective pedagogical strategies that encourage sustained motivation throughout the learning process.

Guided by needs analysis theory, a questionnaire was designed to assess learners' necessities, lacks, and wants in blended translation learning environments, thereby laying the groundwork for subsequent teaching interventions. A total of 96 students from EC and CC participated in the 30-item survey, analysis of the results revealed that students generally exhibited relatively low English proficiency, as evidenced by low pass rates for TEM-4, TEM-8, and CATTI certifications, and limited translation competence due to insufficient systematic training. Key constraints on their translation performance included vocabulary gaps, grammatical weaknesses, and a lack of cultural awareness. Regarding learning preferences, most students preferred pragmatic texts related to their future careers in fields like foreign trade, advertising, and tourism. Many also expressed interest in blended learning, highlighting the value of diverse, practical online resources, despite acknowledging the challenges of translation courses, the students expressed confidence in improving their translation competence through blended learning.

Blended Translation Teaching

Blended learning is an educational approach that strategically integrates online materials and interactions with traditional face-to-face instruction, giving students some control over their learning paths, pace, and time (Graham, 2006). In translation education, blended learning facilitates the development of linguistic and cultural competencies, enabling students to practice skills in diverse, contextually rich environments (Jain & Sharma, 2022). Blended learning plays a vital role in language education by promoting deeper engagement,

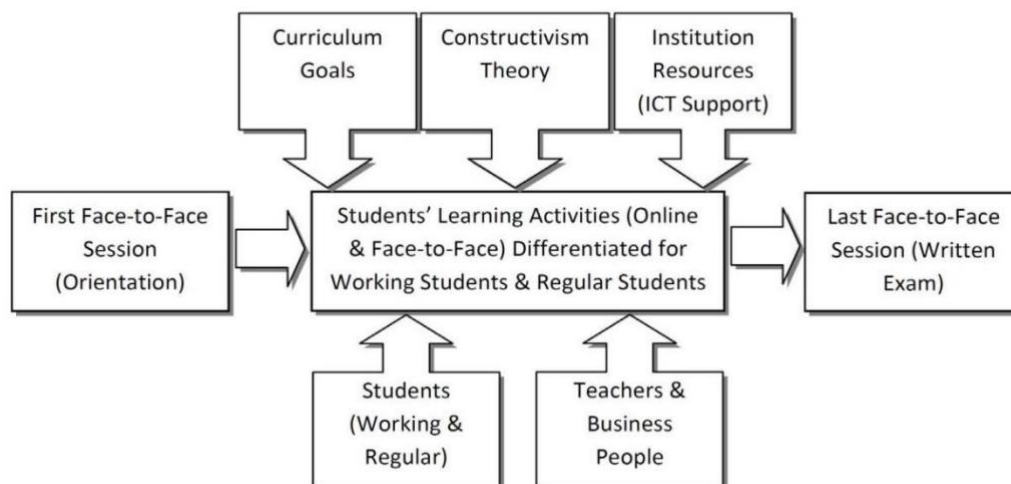
boosting comprehension, and strengthening overall learning outcomes. Given the diverse learning foundations, varying classroom reception capacities, and distinct self-study approaches among students, rich online resources enable flexible access to pre-class reviews and post-class reinforcements. This effectively addresses the challenge of students struggling to grasp all learning content during class and compensates for insufficient in-person class time, while gradually cultivating their ability to learn independently and solve problems through online resources rather than relying solely on in-person lectures and teacher guidance. As demonstrated by Huang et al. (2019), integrating asynchronous online activities, such as self-paced modules enable learners to progress independently, while synchronous face-to-face sessions foster collaborative learning and immediate feedback.

Social Constructivism in Translation Instruction

Social constructivism highlights the active construction of knowledge through meaningful interaction, offer valuable insights for translation instruction. In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized their relevance to translation pedagogy, stressing the learner's active involvement in constructing meaning and developing translation competence (Gile, 2015). Central to this framework is the recognition of learners as active participants in constructing meaning and developing translation competence. For instance, translation tasks that incorporate discussion and reflection enable students to deepen their understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances (Király, 2014). Similarly, González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído (2021) demonstrates that collaborative activities not only strengthen translation skills but also cultivate a supportive learning community. A critical strategy within this paradigm is scaffolding, rooted in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which provides temporary support to guide learners through tasks they cannot independently complete (Wood et al., 1976). By integrating these elements, social constructivism offers a dynamic framework for cultivating both individual and collaborative translation expertise. Al-Huneidi and Schreurs (2011) present the social constructivism-based blended learning model (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Social Constructivism-based Blended Learning Model (Al-Huneidi and Schreurs, 2011, p. 7)



L2MSS in Translation Learning

The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) is a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivational dynamics in language learning. Dörnyei and Csizér's (2002) nationwide study on Hungarian learners of English marked a pivotal moment in its development. Central to this theory is the interplay of three key constructs that shape learners' motivation: the ideal L2 self (aspirations for future linguistic identity), the ought-to L2 self (perceived obligations or expectations), and the L2 learning experience (actual engagement and emotional responses).

In translation learning, these constructs directly influence students' behaviors, such as effort investment and persistence, by shaping their goals (e.g., career aspirations), satisfaction with the learning process, and peer interactions.

Building on the above theoretical foundation, integrating blended learning strategies throughout the translation curriculum is essential. Such teaching intervention not only aligns with learners' intrinsic motivations but also creates a structured environment for sustained translation ability development. This study systematically examines how social constructivist strategies synergize with L2MSS components within blended translation pedagogy. By revealing how collaborative learning environments leverage motivational dynamics between these frameworks, it addresses a critical gap in translation education. Findings provide actionable curriculum design principles that align with learners' motivational profiles.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Blended translation instruction, incorporating social constructivism and L2MSS, was implemented in the EC, while the CC received traditional face-to-face instruction. According to the results of the needs analysis questionnaire, students in both EC and CC had broadly comparable levels of bilingual proficiency and translation competence. A total of 96 students participated in pre- and post-tests comprising identical tasks, and both groups were assessed using a unified translation evaluation standard. The resulting data were analyzed to address research question 1. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten EC students, and the findings were used to answer research question 2.

Research Participants and Settings

The study involved two classes of 48 students each: a control class (CC) and an experimental class (EC), all of whom were third-year English majors at GUST. These two intact classes, which were taught by the researcher, were selected using convenience sampling. The participants (20-22 years old) were distributed into two classes (6 males and 42 females each) based on the school's administrative structure, with no deliberate intervention in class composition. Both classes received sixteen 90-minute offline translation lessons and used the Concise Textbook of Pragmatic Translation as textbook, co-edited by the researcher. This textbook was designed to cover pragmatic translation theories and practices that aligned with the teaching goals of application-oriented universities. In addition, EC used the widely adopted Chinese Learning Management System (LMS), Chaoxing learning platform, for the online component of the course. This included supplementary instructional videos, translation exercises and extended reading materials, all of which were tailored by the researcher to suit each lesson.

Research Instrument

This study addresses two research questions, employing qualitative and quantitative methods. The questionnaire used for the needs analysis is not detailed here.

The Pretest and Posttest

The researcher employed both pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate students' translation performance in CC and EC. The test materials were drawn from past CATTI Level-3 translation examinations and reviewed for content validity by three professors using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The two sets of test papers were of comparable difficulty and covered similar text types, ensuring the validity and reliability of the two assessments. Students' progress in translation competence was measured using the translation quality

assessment form (Table 1), which served as the scoring rubric for both tests. To guarantee inter-rater reliability, all three professors independently assessed a sample of student translations with the form, and their evaluations showed a high degree of consistency.

Table 1

Translation Quality Assessment Form

| Criteria | Aspect | Description | Rating Scale |
|--------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| Faithfulness | Accuracy | Faithfulness to the source text’s meaning. | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| | Diction | Precision and appropriateness of word selection. | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| Fluency | Grammatical Accuracy | Correct grammar and sentence structure. | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| | Naturalness | Naturalness and readability in the target language. | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| Elegance | Cohesion and Coherence | Logical flow and coherence within the text. | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| | Stylistic Appropriateness | Appropriateness of style and tone for the target audience. | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |

The pre- and post-tests evaluate translation proficiency through three core dimensions. Faithfulness assesses how accurately the target text preserves the source meaning, fluency measures grammatical precision, lexical appropriateness, and idiomatic flow in the target language, elegance evaluates logical coherence and stylistic suitability for the target audience.

Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore motivational factors within the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) framework that shape students’ engagement with translation learning in a blended and socially constructivist environment. The interviews focused on three main themes. The first theme, career-goal reinforcement through self-efficacy, examined whether the translation course influenced students’ career aspirations and how it contributed to the formation or adjustment of their professional goals. The second theme, motivational shifts from obligation to autonomy, explored the reasons behind students’ initial commitment to the course and whether their motivations changed over time. The third theme, external goal-driven ought-to self and autonomous learning, investigated factors that motivated students to go beyond the required online resources and seek additional learning materials, as well as how these factors shaped their learning process. The responses from ten students were subjected to thematic analysis, aiming to validate the feasibility of a blended translation teaching approach integrating social constructivism and to identify changes in students’ learning motivation under the designed teaching intervention.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted in two stages. The first stage was a one-week pilot study involving six participants. Following the pilot study, the researcher revised the questionnaire items, adjusted teaching methods and course content, and updated guidelines for online resource usage. In the second stage, the formal experiment was implemented. Prior to the intervention, both EC and CC completed a pre-test, and after the 16-week course, they undertook a post-test. All assessments were administered under the researcher's direct supervision, with strict prohibition of translation assistance software. For the semi-structured interviews, ten students from the EC were selected via systematic sampling, with one participant chosen for every four to five students based on students' ID numbers; these interviews were audio-recorded for subsequent thematic analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

To address research question 1, a quantitative analysis of the pre- and post-test results was conducted. Statistical analysis began with Excel for initial data exploration and descriptive analysis, transitioning to SPSS for inferential testing. First, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check whether the data were normally distributed. Group statistics and independent samples t-tests were then performed on the pre- and post-test scores to compare the performance of the EC with that of the CC. Additionally, paired samples t-tests were carried out within each group to evaluate progress from the pre- to the post-test. Finally, percentage increases in scores were calculated to measure improvement in faithfulness, fluency, elegance and overall translation performance across the two groups. This integrated analytical approach aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the blended teaching method in enhancing translation competence, and determine whether the observed outcomes aligned with the hypothesized effects of the intervention.

To address research question 2, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted following a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019), with pre-determined themes guided by the theoretical framework of the study. This allowed for the systematic identification of motivational factors and learning experiences related to the blended, social constructivist-oriented translation instruction. To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by integrating both quantitative test results and qualitative interview data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the teaching intervention.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the present study are presented in two parts: (1) the extent to which students’ translation skills developed over time under the integration of blended learning, social constructivism approaches, and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS); and (2) the motivational factors within the L2MSS framework that influenced and shaped students’ engagement in translation learning through these approaches.

Development of Students’ Translation Skills under the Integrated Instruction

Prior to inferential analysis, the Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed normality, with p-values for all test items in both classes ranging from 0.052 to 0.901, all exceeding the 0.05 significance threshold, this justified the use of parametric tests for subsequent comparisons.

To investigate the extent to which the designed instruction improved students’ performance in faithfulness, fluency, and elegance, the pretest and posttest scores of EC and CC were statistically analyzed. The findings revealed that EC outperformed CC.

Table 2

Independent Samples T-test - Comparison Between Groups in Pretest and Posttest

| Item | Group | Pretest | | | Sig | Posttest | | | Sig |
|--------------|--------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|----------|--------|-------|-------|
| | | N | M | SD | | N | M | SD | |
| Faithfulness | Experimental | 48 | 25.208 | 4.608 | 0.16 | 48 | 30.625 | 3.505 | 0.000 |
| | Control | 48 | 23.917 | 4.326 | | 48 | 28.000 | 3.087 | |
| Fluency | Experimental | 48 | 19.771 | 2.984 | 0.367 | 48 | 24.188 | 2.322 | 0.002 |
| | Control | 48 | 20.313 | 2.867 | | 48 | 22.688 | 2.185 | |
| Elegance | Experimental | 48 | 19.958 | 3.537 | 0.33 | 48 | 24.063 | 2.436 | 0.003 |
| | Control | 48 | 20.667 | 3.545 | | 48 | 22.438 | 2.689 | |
| Total Score | Experimental | 48 | 64.938 | 10.614 | 0.984 | 48 | 78.875 | 5.184 | 0.000 |
| | Control | 48 | 64.896 | 9.433 | | 48 | 73.125 | 6.400 | |

As shown in Table 2, in the pretest, both classes performed at a comparable level across all dimensions. EC obtained a mean score of 25.208 (SD = 4.608) in faithfulness, while CC scored 23.917 (SD = 4.326), with no significant difference ($p = .160 > .05$). Similarly, in fluency (Exp. M = 19.771, SD = 2.984; Ctrl. M = 20.313, SD = 2.867, $p = .367 > .05$), elegance (Exp. M = 19.958, SD = 3.537; Ctrl. M = 20.667, SD = 3.545, $p = .330 > .05$), and total score (Exp. M = 64.938, SD = 10.614; Ctrl. M = 64.896, SD = 9.433, $p = .984 > .05$), no significant differences were observed. These results indicate that the two groups were equivalent in their translation abilities prior to the intervention.

In the posttest, however, EC outperformed CC across all dimensions. For faithfulness, EC scored higher (M=30.625, SD=3.505) than CC (M=28.000, SD=3.087), with $p=0.000 <$

0.05. For fluency, EC (M=24.188, SD=2.322) exceeded CC (M=22.688, SD=2.185), with $p=0.002 < 0.05$. For elegance, EC (M=24.063, SD=2.436) also outperformed CC (M=22.438, SD=2.689), with $p=0.003 < 0.05$. The total score of the EC (M=78.875, SD=5.184) was significantly higher than that of CC (M=73.125, SD=6.400), with $p=0.000 < 0.05$.

The results indicate that both groups started from a similar baseline in the pre-test. However, after the intervention, the EC group showed significantly greater improvement in all areas: faithfulness, fluency, elegance and total score. This highlights the positive impact of the instructional design on students' translation competence.

Table 3

Dependent Samples T-test — Comparison Within Group

| Experimental Class (N=48) | Pretest | | Posttest | | M Diff | | Sig |
|------------------------------|---------|--------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | Score | % | |
| Faithfulness | 25.208 | 4.608 | 30.625 | 3.505 | 5.417 | 21.49 | 0.000 |
| Fluency | 19.771 | 2.984 | 24.188 | 2.322 | 4.417 | 22.34 | 0.000 |
| Elegance | 19.958 | 3.537 | 24.063 | 2.436 | 4.105 | 20.57 | 0.000 |
| Total Score | 64.938 | 10.614 | 78.875 | 5.184 | 13.937 | 21.46 | 0.000 |
| Control Class (N=48) | Pretest | | Posttest | | M Diff | | Sig |
| | M | SD | M | SD | Score | % | |
| Faithfulness | 23.917 | 4.326 | 28.000 | 3.087 | 4.083 | 17.07 | 0.000 |
| Fluency | 20.313 | 2.867 | 22.688 | 2.185 | 2.375 | 11.69 | 0.000 |
| Elegance | 20.667 | 3.545 | 22.438 | 2.689 | 1.771 | 8.57 | 0.000 |
| Total Score | 64.896 | 9.433 | 73.125 | 6.400 | 8.229 | 12.68 | 0.000 |

The results of the dependent samples T-test conducted to compare the pretest and posttest scores within each class revealed a significant improvement across all aspects (see Table 3). Although both classes showed progress, the extent of improvement in EC was much greater than that in CC.

As shown in Table 3, EC demonstrated substantial gains. Their total score increased by 13.937 points (21.46%), from a pretest mean of 64.938 (SD = 10.614) to a posttest mean of 78.875 (SD = 5.184). Similar improvements were observed in faithfulness (Mdiff = 5.417, 21.49%), fluency (Mdiff = 4.417, 22.34%), and elegance (Mdiff = 4.105, 20.57%). CC also showed improvements but with smaller gains compared to EC. Their total score rose by 8.229 points (12.68%), from 64.896 (SD = 9.433) in the pretest to 73.125 (SD = 6.400) in the posttest. In the sub-dimensions, faithfulness increased by 4.083 points (17.07%), fluency by 2.375 points (11.69%), and elegance by 1.771 points (8.57%). All improvements reported above were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level.

In the post-test, students in EC demonstrated stronger performance in several aspects of translation quality. Their work reflected more accurate lexical choices and maintained

stylistic coherence with the source text, allowing target-language readers to grasp the intended message and experience effects comparable to those of the original audience. This outcome corresponds with Nida and Taber's (1974) functional equivalence framework, which highlights that the success of translation lies in reproducing the communicative impact of the source rather than strictly following its form. In summary, despite the fact that both groups improved significantly from pretest to posttest, EC outperformed CC by a considerable margin in every aspect, this superior progress provides clear evidence that the integration of the designed instruction effectively enhanced students' overall translation performance.

Motivational Factors Influencing Engagement within the L2MSS Framework

The semi-structured interviews with ten EC students were examined through thematic analysis, and representative excerpts from their responses were selected to illuminate the key themes and directly address the research question.

Career-Goal Reinforcement through Self-Efficacy

Several students noted that the course not only enhanced their confidence but also clarified or reinforced their professional aspirations.

“This course has strengthened my determination to pursue further study in translation. I now feel more confident about preparing for postgraduate exams and even envision myself becoming a translation teacher in the future.” (Student 1)

“Although I don't plan to become a full-time translator, the course showed me how translation skills can be applied practically. I am considering part-time projects alongside my academic path, especially since daily practice has become motivating.” (Student 4)

“Doing well in this course will give me the chance to explore part-time translation work. That possibility motivates me to put in more effort now.” (Student 8)

These excerpts illustrate how students' ideal L2 self, whether as professional translators or academically oriented individuals intersects with their motivation. Consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, confidence gained through successful engagement in translation tasks strengthened students' commitment to long-term goals.

From Obligation to Autonomy: Motivational Shifts in Blended Translation Learning

Students' reflections revealed a shift from externally driven obligations, such as exam pressure, to more autonomous forms of motivation connected with personal interests and professional aspirations.

“The abundance of online resources and engaging classroom activities motivated me to prepare for CATTI and apply for postgraduate studies. Clear goals made learning feel less like a burden.” (Student 1)

“My interest in translation and passion for reading diplomatic news keep me motivated. I hope to become a translator who facilitates cross-cultural communication.” (Student 3)

“At first, exam requirements were my main driver. Later, when research topics were introduced, I became more engaged and even decided to write a translation-related undergraduate thesis.” (Student 6)

These accounts highlight the diversification of students’ motivation, from exam-oriented compliance to self-directed engagement with translation tasks. Such progression reflects Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that autonomy fosters intrinsic motivation (Reeve, 2024). By offering resource-rich content and interactive learning opportunities, the blended model enabled students to regulate their own progress, reinforcing autonomy and deepening their long-term commitment to translation learning (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

External Goal-Driven Ought-to Self and Autonomous Learning

Students’ proactive learning behaviors were often triggered by external pressures, reflecting the influence of the Ought-to Self (Dörnyei, 2009) while also encouraging autonomous strategies.

“To prepare for exams like TEM-8 and CATTI, I review vocabulary and practice translation daily, even beyond the required resources.” (Student 4)

“When facing difficulties in translation, I first search online or consult books rather than relying immediately on the teacher.” (Student 8)

“Because my foundation is weaker, I study extra in my free time to reduce pressure and participate more confidently in class.” (Student 10)

These narratives suggest that external academic demands (exams, peer comparisons) activate students’ Ought-to Self, which in turn fosters independent learning behaviors. This interplay aligns with social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the flexibility of blended learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2021), showing how external drivers can be transformed into autonomous learning practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research underscores the potential of blended translation pedagogy to enhance proficiency and learner agency, while emphasizing the necessity of teacher-led guidance to sustain motivation and ensure effective implementation. Both the EC and CC underwent a 16-week systematic translation instruction, with the EC engaging in a blended learning approach and the CC following a traditional, lecture-based offline model. A mixed-methods research design was employed to analyze pre- and post-test performance, improvements in translation proficiency, and the role of students’ L2MSS in shaping learning outcomes. The study further examined how the blended pedagogical strategies, informed by social constructivist principles and tailored to students’ motivational factors, influenced translation academic achievement.

Regarding translation proficiency, as assessed by the established translation evaluation standard, both classes demonstrated progress in faithfulness, fluency, and elegance, notably,

the EC outperformed the CC in all three dimensions. Observations by the researcher revealed that EC students, supported by online resources, exhibited heightened proactivity in learning. They actively participated in classroom discussions, embraced challenging tasks (e.g., provincial/national translation competitions), and pursued professional certifications like CATTI. These findings underscore the efficacy of Chaoxing learning platform's digital resources and social constructivism scaffolding in fostering engagement. Over time, EC students sustained elevated motivation, cultivated autonomous learning habits, and developed clearer career or postgraduate study plans, with many expressing intentions to pursue translation-focused master's degrees or professional translation career.

The study also highlighted the amplified role of instructors in blended environments. Contrary to assumptions that technology reduces teaching workload, the EC's success depended heavily on educators' adaptability and pedagogical expertise. As Chen (2022) noted, while most participants exhibited high motivation, engagement, and responsibility, their moderate autonomy underscored the irreplaceable role of teachers in blended settings. However, the CC, though showing incremental improvements under traditional instruction, lagged behind the EC in motivation, participation, and willingness to tackle advanced tasks.

In addition, semi-structured interviews revealed that EC students perceived online resources as providing notable support in their learning. For instance, more introverted or shy students reported that they could use the online platform to leave messages for the teacher, which allowed them to seek solutions without the anxiety of speaking up in class. Students with weaker foundations emphasized that access to preparatory materials online enabled them to study in advance, helping to break the long-standing belief that they were "poor learners" who could not keep up with classroom instruction. Others, however, noted that while online resources were useful, they still relied heavily on face-to-face instruction, underscoring the unique advantages of high-quality in-person teaching. Furthermore, weaker students reported that receiving public praise in class and positive feedback on assignments significantly enhanced their learning experiences, boosting both their confidence and motivation.

These findings resonate with previous research showing that online learning environments can support differentiated and learner-centered engagement (Anderson, 2008; Hrastinski, 2009), while the value of face-to-face instruction remains critical in blended models (Garrison & Vaughan, 2021). Moreover, the positive role of teacher feedback aligns with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes that encouragement and recognition from authority figures strengthen learners' confidence and persistence. Together, these insights highlight how blended learning environments can provide both flexibility and support, particularly for students with lower initial proficiency or motivation.

Application-oriented universities in China aim to prepare students to meet local economic development needs, and their teaching materials and methods should therefore differ from those of comprehensive universities. Yet, in reality, detailed needs analyses are rarely carried out before a course begins. Many teachers, accustomed to using the same textbooks and

teaching approaches over years, overlook the fact that students' language foundations, class dynamics, and learning habits change annually. With the increasing accessibility of online resources, this gap becomes more evident. As emphasized by West (1994), needs analysis is a systematic procedure for identifying the gap between learners' current competence and the level necessary to reach their goals. The absence of such analysis can easily result in a misalignment between teaching and actual learner needs, reducing both learning efficiency and motivation. Conducting needs analysis is thus particularly valuable, as it helps instructors to understand students' learning contexts and adapt the teaching scope and sequence, instructional design accordingly.

In application-oriented universities in China, relatively few students pursue postgraduate studies, as a result, teaching content needs to be closely aligned with students' career planning in order to sustain their learning motivation. Research and pedagogy in such contexts must therefore be application-oriented, since learners' academic needs, professional plans, teaching materials and instructional methods suitable for them differ substantially from those in comprehensive universities. In preparing for this study, the researcher reviewed a wide range of literature on blended learning, translation pedagogy, applied undergraduate education, social constructivism, and L2MSS. However, very few studies have sought to integrate these perspectives in a coherent framework to enhance students' translation competence, and empirical research in this area remains scarce. For example, this study addresses that gap by examining how application-oriented learners' Ought-to L2 Self is shaped primarily by external demands, such as career expectations, teacher feedback, and employability concerns rather than by intrinsic academic interests alone (Dörnyei, 2009). It further illustrates how social constructivism principles (Vygotsky, 1978) can be operationalized in practice through collaborative, task-based translation activities within blended learning environments. In doing so, the research contributes both to theoretical discussions on L2 motivation and to the practical development of translation pedagogy for application-oriented universities.

Although this study has advanced the theoretical and empirical understanding of blended translation pedagogy at Chinese universities with a focus on applications, there are still several areas for improvement and further research.

Firstly, all of the participants were recruited from a single private university in Guangdong Province, China. This inevitably limits the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could compare students from private and comprehensive universities to examine potential differences in learning needs (e.g. career-oriented versus academic translation skills) and motivational orientations in blended translation contexts. Such comparative research would also help to identify whether translation instruction has differential impacts on students' future academic or career planning across institutional types. Besides, it is essential to expand the participant pool beyond Guangdong Province, as regional variations in economic development and educational values may influence learners' engagement and expectations.

Broader sampling would enhance the external validity and applicability of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Furthermore, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, in addition to blended translation teaching, has opened up new avenues for future research. It is becoming increasingly important to investigate how teachers can use AI tools, such as machine translation platforms and automated feedback systems, to increase classroom interaction, provide personalised feedback and encourage student independence (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Integrating AI-driven educational tools into translation pedagogy introduces novel challenges regarding the evolving skill set required of translators in the technology-mediated era. Key competencies now include critically analysing machine-generated translations and combining human ingenuity with algorithmic advancements. Consequently, syllabus development, conventional textbooks and instructional frameworks must be reimaged to align with the demands of a technologically advanced, data-intensive learning ecosystem.

This study provides empirical evidence and theoretical insights into the effectiveness and feasibility of blended translation teaching in application-oriented undergraduate institutions. It highlights the important role of social constructivism and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in improving classroom effectiveness, encouraging learner autonomy and maintaining students' long-term motivation to learn translation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that these pedagogical approaches have implications not only for translation studies, but also for other disciplines and courses within application-oriented universities. Future research could expand to other universities using comparative mixed-methods designs to examine cross-institutional variations in implementation effectiveness and motivational outcomes. Aligning instructional design with students' motivational profiles and leveraging blended learning environments enables educators to create more engaging, adaptive and sustainable learning experiences, contributing to improvements in teaching practice across applied higher education.

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