

# Capacities expected of Chinese English Translation Students Surveying Prospective Employers in Australia and China

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*This paper discusses findings of a recent survey of employability for Chinese English translation students in Australia and China. Basically the survey addresses two questions with a focus on the second. No. 1, what are job/career opportunities like in each jurisdiction? No. 2, what capacities are expected of successful candidates? The survey identified and coded keywords and then tallied their frequencies to generate evidence on the basis of which a list of findings were made. One finding was that a wide range of capacities in addition to translation skills was expected of the candidates. Another finding was that some of the additional capacities, including notably English competence and communication, are seen as more important and valuable than translation skills. Furthermore, some capacities and qualities (e.g., accuracy and faithfulness), which were of great concern to translation researchers and trainers, appeared to be irrelevant to prospective employers of translators. These and other findings of the survey provided cause for a number of academic reflections.*

**Keywords:** Capacity, translation, teaching, need analysis, curriculum design

## A real-life story that partially prompted this survey

I would like to open this paper with a real story. Late 2010, in the middle of lesson preparation, I received a phone call from a former graduate, who was working as a project manager for a major Australia-based investment and wealth-management bank. He had found an officially accredited translator/

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interpreter to help to host a week-long exchange study tour of experts from a prestigious Chinese insurance company. The translator/interpreter strove to perform but had to abort in the middle of the first morning, prompting the emergency call to my office for help.

Sometime afterwards, the graduate told me the following, which I found highly credible, given my knowledge of the profession in Sydney. He had looked up a directory provided by the national accreditation authority in order to find a reliable person for the job. He found that most candidates listed lived in two postcodes of low social-cultural prestige, had very poor telephone manners, were not very articulate in English and had experiences limited in scope (understandable as they mostly freelanced), in fields (legal and medical) and in depth (with little specialised knowledge other than translation), and were inadequately informed in terms of even the basic social and workplace practice (e.g., billing, workplace insurance and professional remuneration rates). Furthermore, only a small minority were accredited as both translators and interpreters and, worse still, many were accredited one way only (i.e., into Chinese or into English).

On the first morning, many unfortunate events colluded to make the mission impossible for the freelancer. Several things brought his eventual downfall. First of all, he was very uncomfortable speaking and standing side-by-side with the presenter in front of an audience and so sounded very disorganized. When he interpreted, he struggled but nonetheless could not work in any style other than a so-called accurate and structured translation and therefore his output was unnecessarily wordy and time-wasteful to the knowledgeable Chinese audience. Then he was asked to translate a 10-page powerpoint presentation into Chinese and he requested an office where he could write up the translation without disruption. 'Universities teach a bunch of very privileged and starved specialists who don't live in the real world', my former student commented to me.

I am sure that many other translators would manage a similar assignment more competently. I also know that the freelancer is not an isolated case. I would have liked to be a charitable trainer who sympathises with the miserable freelancer, knowing that translation is intellectually a highly specialised activity, that users of translators need to be educated, and that translators need to hold out on job terms and conditions. Nevertheless, I would rather be a teacher to students who will have a future and a solid place in the real world.

## Needs

Language teaching 'should be approached from the starting point of language needs' (Yalden 1987: 48). I believe three types of needs are central to the current landscape of the teaching of Chinese-English translation in Australian and Chinese universities and perhaps also in many comparable programs internationally. Type 1 is the need to attract maximum full-fee paying students into its education export industry. Type 2 is the need of large numbers of students from Mainland China to gain an international academic degree/experience and, in more than negligible cases, to gain a permanent visa to stay in the host country. Type 3 is rather pedagogical, embodied in the desires of the teachers to develop elitist translators. Types 1 and 2 needs have been discussed in Zhong (2010) and so will not be revisited here.

As to Type 3 need, it warrants special attention and is best articulated in trainers' aspiration to 'create the future generation of translators which we should be aiming at, namely, a generation in which the average translator is as good as the better translator of today' (Brian Mossop 2000, quoted in Davies: 43)—I must add that in actual teaching we tend to exhort students to learn from the better translators of yesterday, i.e., historic role models, their insight, knowledge and experiences. For example, role models used in the teaching of translation between English and Chinese include the likes of Chen Wangdao (i.e., Chinese translator of *Communist Manifesto*). The distinction between yesterday and today is of great significance as it influences the way we teach—more on this shortly.

In addition to the three types of needs, there is another type of need, i.e., knowledge, capacities and skills required of translation graduates by the modern society and the industry? Yet this need appears not to have been visible, let alone addressed adequately in many existing university translation programs, including especially Australia-based Chinese English programs in the best of my knowledge and experiences acquired from different institutions. Kiraly (2000), Folaran (2003), Pym (2003) and Massey (2005) discussed this failure in relation to electronic skills. Given my knowledge and experiences as an academic and practitioner, I believed there were other capacities and skills of the real world, which are also oblivious in translation classrooms. An aspiration to understand this need inspired the survey discussed in this paper.

## The survey and its design

This survey was designed to understand better the need of the job market by addressing the following questions. What was the career prospect like for translators? Were the translators developed by existing curricula the kind of professionals required by the real-life industry? What translators were more employable? What capacities other than text-based translation would make translators more employable? How should the teaching of translation be improved to enhance the employability of translation students?

To accomplish the purpose of the survey, I adopted a sampling method quite time-consuming but fruitful and reliable, which involved surveying and monitoring job/career advertisements listed in online employment sites in Australia from January to August 2011 and in China within a 90 day period in mid-2011 before creating the three samples for analyses, which will be elaborated on shortly.

I analysed the data by a method known as stylistics, broadly known as a critical approach that used the methods and findings of linguistics in the analysis of texts (Barry 1995; Birch 1989). Precedents of using stylistics to analyse texts included Zhong's (2003) speech length-based analysis of Chinese television talk show and Fowler's (1966) collocation-based analysis of a novel by William. For my project, I started by sifting through the target sections of the target texts (i.e., the advertisements), which generally appeared under such subheadings as 'tasks and responsibilities', 'duties and responsibilities', 'competencies' and 'qualifications'. Next I picked and coded words and descriptions that appeared frequently throughout the samples. At this stage, I also grouped synonyms (e.g., 'fully conversant with IT tools' and 'good computer skills') together to form a list of keywords. Then I examined collocations, which 'refers to the habitual or expected co-occurrence of words' (Wales, 1989), in order to understand what different things were seen as important when together. With regard to Chinese language advertisements, I translated the keywords into English. I then tallied the frequencies of the keywords throughout all the advertisements because I believed that their frequencies could indicate the extent of their importance to the employers. This analysis formed the basis on which I derived generalizations.

## Survey scope and samples

As I am based in Sydney, home to three sizable tertiary postgraduate Chinese-English translation programs, I chose to target for my survey the job markets in Australia and China. And assuming that most advertisements made their way into the World Wide Web in this modern age and knowing the impossibility and infeasibility of browsing all the print-media advertisements, I decided to focus on online sources, especially the most widely known and prestigious career and job sites. In order not to miss major data, I also searched a major search engine in Australia and China.

For the Chinese job market, I scanned a number of online job sites (e.g., <http://www.01hr.com/>, <http://jobs.zhaopin.com> and <http://www.baidu.com/>) and found that anyone of them would list hundreds or even more advertisements anytime for any of the major Chinese cities. I chose to limit the search to one job site so that I could generate data which was of significant quantity and which I was able to manage. I chose <http://www.01hr.com/> on which I searched for translator vacancies advertised in the last 90 days in Guangzhou, one of the largest and developed Chinese cities. The search produced a total of 431 postings (including several of multiple positions) on 19 of August 2011. Of these, 34 clearly indicated a salary range (¥1,500-5000 a month) and none of the rest provided any information about remuneration. So these 34 advertisements comprised Chinese Sample I for my survey. There were 12 other separate advertisements posted by a translator agency known as Guangzhou Xinqiao, which also contained clear information about salary range (above ¥50,000 a month). The latter comprised Chinese Sample II for my survey.

For the Australian job market, I searched a number of online job sites regularly from January to August 2011. They include <http://www.careerone.com.au/>; <http://www.indeed.com.au/>; <http://www.seek.com.au/>; <http://mycareer.com.au/> and <http://www.google.com.au>. For analysis of the present survey, I decided to use the search result from <http://www.seek.com.au/> on 29 July 2011 because the search through the other Australian sites ended up fruitless. The search yielded no or little outcome except one or two advertisements for free lancers posted by translation agencies on each online site. Then on 29 July, I miraculously spotted 6 advertisements on <http://www.seek.com.au/> (but regrettably none on other sites simultaneously). I decided to use this meagre but apparently valuable sample (known as Sample III) for my analysis.

## Survey findings

I will discuss the survey findings next, starting with the search result in quantity and types of positions advertised. After reviewing these trivial-looking but straight factual data, I will be able to concentrate on the issue of capacities and skills.

### *Were there jobs in the two jurisdictions, how many and what jobs?*

I will first discuss the findings in quantitative terms. The search for job advertisements involving translation was not fruitful for the Australian jurisdiction and quite disappointing for the Chinese jurisdiction. For the former, only six relevant advertisements were found dated sometime in the first seven months of 2011 that involved Chinese English translation. They included two fulltime positions (one by a mining company and another, a nine-month contract, by an engineering company) and four panel translator positions (two posted by a franchise law firm and another two posted by a translation agency).

For the Chinese job market, the search yielded a quantitatively greater but qualitatively somewhat disappointing outcome. Of the four popular commercial job sites, each listed hundreds of positions sometime from January to July 2011. There were positions involving many languages (e.g., Japanese, German, French and Arabic etc) other than English but more than 80% of them were for English-Chinese translators. Furthermore, more than half of all the advertisements were posted by translation agencies for panel translators or by translators for jobs. More disappointingly, translators tended not to be represented as professional jobs. For example, Zhaopin did not even include translators as professionals on its site (<http://whitecollar.zhaopin.com/>) even though it clearly marked marketers, project managers, accountants, quality controllers, financiers, human resource managers as professionals. An indicated monthly wage as low as ¥2,000 to 2,500 (about US\$300-400) per month was not uncommon for translation positions advertised in all the Chinese job sites, which was hardly better than the wage given to lowly educated assembly-line workers employed by typical sweatshop manufacturers.

In short, this is what the search result said with regard to the quantity and quality of the career opportunities for students studying Chinese

English translation in Australia and China. There were barely any jobs of any kind, career-wise or freelance-type, in Australia. Opportunities appeared to be plentiful in China but the question is whether they would match the expectations of the Australia-trained students. For one thing, a wage of ¥2,000-2,500 (about US\$300-400) per month or less than ¥30,000 (US\$5000) per year is not much compared to an annual tuition of ¥140,000 (more than US\$22,000) paid for an Australian education—more on this question shortly. This is depressing news for the hundreds of students enrolled to study Chinese and English translation in Australia and also cause for reflection for the training providers.

### *What were required of translation students?*

I will now discuss the requirements for translation students in terms of educational qualification, professional accreditation/certification and experience. Some of the requirements in this regard may appear to be commonsensical but there are a couple of surprises.

First of all, what was the minimal educational qualification required? The Chinese employers required either a diploma or a degree. A big surprise was that none of the job advertisements sourced from Australia specified any requirements regarding education qualifications. Was it because a professional accreditation or certification was seen as more important? Not really, because as will be seen shortly, requirement of accreditation or certification was not absolute or stringent either. Was it an indication of the low professional prestige associated to translators? I tend to agree, on the basis of the sum of evidence available to me.

With regard to professional accreditation or certification, the requirement seemed to be anything but absolute or consistent—another surprise. Accreditation at the professional level (Level 3) by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters was preferable but not essential as far as the six Australian advertisements indicated and accreditation at the paraprofessional level (Level 2) was only required in the two advertisements posted by the law firm. For the Chinese vacancies, only a small minority of the advertisements (i.e., 5 pieces) deemed a national Level 2 certificate as a desirable qualification. By comparison, requirement for certificates in English competence was clearly stated in two Australian advertisements and in

seventeen of the Chinese advertisements sampled. The above mentioned law firm required an IELTS certificate of 7.5.

Requirement for work experience appears to be of even greater concern to most of the employers responsible for the sampled advertisements. The requirement is clearly spelled out in most advertisements (e.g., 'a minimum of 3 years experience acting as a translator' in the case of an Australian law firm). In some other advertisements, requirement may appear to be vague but nonetheless quite daunting (e.g., 'Extensive translating and interpreting experience in the construction field' as required by an Australian miner, or 'proven experiences in immigration-related translation' seen as an advantage by a Chinese immigration agent).

### ***Capacities required of translation students***

The term capacity in this paper is defined as professionally and occupationally related knowledge (including ethics), competence, skills, capabilities and attitudes, which can be used professionally or occupationally to fulfil work duties and responsibilities. Where I use capacity, other scholars (White 1959, Gilbert 1978) may use 'competence', which is usually defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and behaviour used to perform a task, to improve performance or to play a specific role. Between the two, capacity, a concept frequently discussed and cited in economics, emphasises enhancement and utilization (Berndt and Morrison 1981, Stiglitz 1993), hence the frequent citation of 'capacity building', 'capacity expansion' as well the more ominous-sounding 'under-capacity' and 'excess capacity'. Being an advocate for rethinking translation economically (Zhong 2006), I choose to talk capacity rather than its more common counterpart, which is why I have adopted the term for use in this paper.

Understandably, most employers expect their prospective employees to possess certain capacities in addition to hardcopy credentials (i.e., degree and certificate) and, to make their talent hunt purposeful, they would normally state these in job advertisements. My survey did spot a small number of advertisements stating little expectation of capacities, which were posted by small-scale manufacturers in China. These were limited exceptions and the majority of the advertisements were very clear regarding capacities expected of prospective employees.

To ascertain what capacities mattered to prospective employers of English Chinese translators, I read and analysed all the advertisements sampled for this survey, identified the capacities stated in the target sections (i.e., 'qualifications', 'your profile', 'competencies', 'required qualifications' and 'required skills and experiences') of the advertisements, grouped synonymous descriptions (e.g., computer literacy, conversant with MS Office and familiar with office software) into one capacity type represented by a keyword. Next, I will discuss the capacities valued by prospective employers of translators, starting with Chinese Sample I. I will then corroborate the findings by comparing other samples to this one. I should have started with *English proficiency* and *can do* (能力) because on the basis of available evidence these two capacities were of much greater concern to employers of translators. This paper is dedicated to the capacities required of translators, so I have decided to open with *translation competence*. The following discussions are based on data analysis of Chinese Sample I unless otherwise specified.

### ***Translation competence***

Naturally, translation expertise was of concern to prospective employers seeking talents in the profession. The word 'translation', including its Chinese variants 'written translation' (笔译), 'interpreting' (口译), 'two-way translation' (互译), 'to translate' (译) and 'translator' (译员), made a total of 34 appearances in Chinese Sample I. This was a high word count but not as high as that of 'English' and '*can power*', which would be seen as a little surprise. These included appearances in 10 instances of collocations indicating requirement for translation competence, such as 'having translation expertise' (具有翻译能力) and 'being able to translate' (可以翻译); 6 instances of collocations indicating requirement of excellent translation competence, such as a 'well-trained translators' (熟练翻译), 'cultivated in translation' (精通翻译) or 'seasoned in translation' (翻译功底深厚) and 3 instances of collocations indicating requirement of a track record in the profession. There is also one advertisement by Yiming Trading, which required a person 'who can translate brochures and manuals by means of computer software'.

The biggest surprise was the absence of words or collocations often common and important to the translation discourse, especially to the official Chinese discourse of translation as discussed by Zhong (2012). There was no appearance

of words like ‘equivalence’ (对等), ‘accuracy’ (准确 or 精确), ‘faithful’ (忠实), the like of which were often used to describe quality of translation. Indeed, I failed to find any clearly and specifically stated requirement in terms of translation speed or quality. I wonder if the absence of these words reflected appreciation of Reiss’ (1989) notion of functional translation, according to which translation should do justice to the function of the text rather than being faithful to the source text.

### **English proficiency**

English was a capacity most frequently required of the candidates. The word ‘English’ (including its Chinese variants 英文, 英语) appeared 69 times—this word count did not include ‘English’ when used in conjunction to ‘translation’. This was of a much higher frequency than the word ‘translation’ and other keywords in Chinese Sample I. Understandably, ‘English’ was one of those very common words having a greater probability of being repeated in everyday documents. Why did ‘translation’ appear only half as frequently as ‘English’ in advertisements for translators? A viable explanation was that English proficiency was of greater concern and importance.

This explanation was supported by the frequencies of words signifying educational levels and qualifications, which were usually seen as of vital concern to prospective employers of a modern society. ‘Degree’ and ‘diploma’ (including its Chinese variants 本科, 大专 and 专科) recorded only 19 appearances in aggregate, including 8 appearances in conjunction to ‘English’ or related discipline. ‘Certificate’ (证书) recorded 17 appearances, almost all in conjunction with ‘English’ (e.g., certificates acquired from College English Test and Test for English Major). ‘Grade (级) and ‘level’ (水平) recorded 17 and 7 appearances respectively, all but two of which occurred in conjunction with English proficiency including especially English tests. By comparison, these descriptions of qualifications and levels appeared rarely in conjunction with ‘translation’, including 3 collocations involving ‘certificate’, 2 collocations involving ‘level’.

The word count also suggested that attention given to English went beyond possession of educational qualifications and that the ability to actually use English were central in the selection of appropriate candidates for vacancies. The word ‘fluent’ appeared 9 times in collocation with English, including ‘fluent and smooth’ (流利) 7 times and ‘fluent and unimpeded’ (流畅) 2 times.

Three advertisements clearly stated a requirement of ‘comprehensive capacity in English’ (综合能力) and another three advertisements specifically required ‘English competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing’. The word ‘expression’ (表达) in conjunction with English appeared in five different advertisements. Furthermore, seven different advertisements specifically required prospective employees to have the ability to deal with (i.e., discuss, negotiate and consult with) international clients. In short, many prospective employers expected their staff to have English competence, to have certificates to substantiate their competence and, more importantly, to have the real capacity to use that competence for communication.

### **Can do (能力)**

The prospective employers were looking for people who can do (能力), that is, those who had real-life knowledge and skills to perform, to complete workplace duties, to get things done and to produce results. This was obvious from the keywords used, including especially ‘competence’ (能力, i.e., *can power*), being the second most frequent word and appearing 44 times. Being able to substantiate the competence and to actually perform work duties seemed to be of great importance too as ‘experience’ (经验) and ‘operate’ (操作, a verb) recorded 23 and 9 appearances respectively. The frequency of these words was notable in comparison to that of many other keywords usually seen as important in relation to career developments, including ‘translation’ (34), ‘degree’ (19), ‘certificate’ (17), and ‘knowledge’ (1)—the digit in each bracket indicating the frequency of the word.

The collocations in which keywords (e.g., ‘competence’ and ‘experience’) signifying *can do* (能力) appeared were quite revealing too. Of its 44 appearances, ‘competence’ occurred in conjunction with ‘language’ 22 times. Remember the emphasis placed on ‘fluent’ English discussed previously? Apparently, being truly able to use English and to do it fluently really mattered in the Chinese job market. Furthermore, ‘competence’ also occurred with ‘communication’ (including ‘coordination’ and ‘public relations’) 12 times. Of its 23 appearances, ‘experience’ occurred in conjunction with ‘office work’ 7 times, with ‘trading’ 5 times, and with ‘engineering’ 4 times. By comparison, ‘competence’ and ‘experience’ in translation seemed to be of secondly concern as the two words co-occurred with ‘translation’ only 4 and 3 times respectively.

## Communication skills

Communication, comprising a range of skills, was another capacity given much attention to on the basis of word frequency. In Chinese Sample I, the word 沟通 (literally meaning 'communication') appeared 16 times. A number of other words were used, which could be considered synonymous to 'communication', each 3 or 5 times in Chinese Sample I. These included 表达 (expression), 谈判 (negotiation) and 协调 (coordination). Furthermore, several other words, 'socialisation' (社交) and 'exchange' (交流), also synonymous to communication, were found each once or twice in Chinese Sample I.

There was evidence to suggest that the word count did not fully reflect the attention given to alternative channels of communication. None of the words mentioned in the preceding paragraph appeared in the statement 'ability to relate to other people through each of Sina Microblog, Tencent Microblog, Renren Net, Facebook and Twitter', quoted from an advert by Danxiao Information Technology. Furthermore, the company asked interested applicants to provide details of own Blog addresses and size of fan population. Yet the requirement in terms of communication capacity, albeit through new media and channels, was apparent in the advert. Nor did the word count seem to fully account for the attention given to attributes known for facilitating effective communication. For example, Meixin Service Centre had a very short and simple statement regarding the kind of people it would require to fill its translator's position: 'diploma in English, attentive to detail, able to listen and understand, and diligence. To me, 'ability to listen and understand' was equivalent to (or facilitative of) effective communication.

The linguistic structure in which 'communication' appeared reflected what the prospective Chinese employers thought of communication. The collocation of 'communication capacity' (沟通能力) indicated that communication was seen as a capacity. To fill its purchaser's position, Huidongsheng Building Materials wanted a candidate with, among other things, 'team spirit, strong communication and negotiation capacity', which signalled that communication was seen as a tool to sound teamwork and inter-personal work relations. Shangshou Information Technology expected its applicants to 'be keen to communicate' (乐于沟通), in which communication was seen as an attitudinal matter. Indeed, communication often appeared in conjunction with attitude or personality-related words including 'open and clear' (开朗), 'out-going' (外向) and 'optimistic' (乐观). For example, Shangshou Information Technology had

the following requirement in relation to communication capacity:

*The job fits a person with 'an out-going (外向), 'endearing and harmonising' (亲和力) personality, with 'good skills in communication' (善于与人沟通), with 'strong readiness to serve' (服务意向强) and with 'a good look' (形像好).*

## People skills

The capacity to relate to, to cooperate with and to organize other people was generally classified as people skills in this paper. Actually it overlapped with communication because the two complement each other but I chose to separate *people skills* because the concept emphatically brought other people into the picture. In Chinese Sample I, prominence was given to both external and internal people, when 'client' (客户) and 'team' (团队) appeared 17 and 12 times respectively. Where either word was used, it was also highly likely to spot words like 'communicate', 'cooperation' and the like. For example, these words were all found in one of the requirements by Huihong High-Tech Trading: the candidate should 'express well, communicate effectively, have team cooperation spirit and communicate well with clients'. Furthermore, the use of the many attitude and personality-related words listed in the preceding paragraph also provided evidence of attention given to people skills.

## Technological expertise

By technological expertise, I refer to a range of knowledge, abilities and experiences required for performing various modern office computer-based duties as specified by the advertisements sampled. Of the thirty-four advertisements, nineteen articulated some form of requirements for such expertise. Most of them required rather general capacity in operating and/or maintaining a 'computer' (电脑 和 计算机)—a word that appeared 8 times, in using software (软件)—a word that appeared 17 times and in working in an electronic environment—the word 'electronic' appearing 4 times. In relation to 'software', the word appeared 8 times in conjunction with 'office software' (办公软件) and the word 'office' appeared 8 times in Chinese (办公) and another 6 times in English. Of the office software, 'Email' and 'Photoshop' were

mentioned 4 times while 'Excel', 'Powerpoint' and 'Word' were each mentioned 3 times.

Mostly, only a general technological capacity was required, as seen in this advert posted by Guangchuanjiajing Marketing, the applicant must, among other things, 'be able to fluently use a computer and Office and Power and related software'. Several prospective employers did have quite demanding expectations. For example, HK Lixin International expected expertise in 'using Office software', 'graphic editing by Photoshop' and 'profound abilities required for system repair, intranet maintenance, software and related system installation'. Danxiao Information Technology expected an 'ability to relate to other people through each of Sina Microblog, Tencent Microblog, Renren Net, Facebook and Twitter'. Three of the prospective employers also expected applicants to be conversant with e-commerce. For example, Ajiani Fashion wanted an English translator who was 'able to use Office software, familiar with online foreign trade, especially with Alibaba online platform'. Last but not least, there was the requirement by Yiming Trading mentioned earlier, which required 'a person who can translate brochures and manuals by means of computer software'.

### *Chinese and Cantonese*

On the basis of the word count, a command of the Chinese language and Cantonese (i.e., dialect of Guangzhou) was also a capacity valued by a fair number of prospective employers of translators. In Chinese Sample I, there were a total of 10 appearances of words signifying a local language variety, including 4 for Chinese (中文 or 汉语), 3 for Mandarin Chinese (普通话) and 3 for Cantonese (粤语). This was additional to the appearance of the word in relation to translation between English and Chinese. In one instance, Huangtengda Information Service looked for a translator, who 'has a English Major Level 8 certificate, translates fluently between English and Chinese and expresses and writes logically, clearly and smoothly in Chinese'. In isolated instances, the expectation of Chinese competence exceeded that of English and translation competence. For example, Bona Consulting required for its vacancy an electric and gas engineer who 'competently uses standard Chinese' and 'is fairly good at translation'.

### *Other disciplinary expertise*

Of the thirty-four separate advertisements of Chinese Sample I, many required specialized disciplinary knowledge in addition to translation. Only six of them offered vacancies of dedicated translators. Four others offered positions for which translation and language-related work, such as 'translation/customer relation' (翻译客服) constituted the primary work responsibility. All of the other twenty-four advertisements offered hybrid positions that required competence in translation or language service as well as qualifications, knowledge, training and experiences in other disciplines, including commerce, medicine, bio-engineering and information technology. Word count again provided evidence for this, including 15 appearances of 'net' (网页, 网络 or 网站), 6 appearances of 'commerce' (商务), 5 appearances of 'medical sciences' (医学), 4 appearances of information technology/system (信息 and 程序), 3 appearances of 'trading' (贸易), 'marketing' (营销) and 'bio sciences' (生物) respectively. Journalism, media studies, graphic design, animation, fine arts and teaching were other disciplines named in the advertisements.

### *The heart and other attitudinal elements*

A number of words describing personality, emotion and attitudes were also frequent in the advertisements sampled, including 'heart', 'spirit' and 'responsible', etc. Most frequent was 'heart' (心), 16 times—including 6 times in 'heart for responsibility' (责任心), 5 times in 'careful heart' (细心), 3 times in 'patient heart' (耐心) and 2 times in 'career heart' (事业心). Second most frequent was the word 'spirit' (精神), 12 times—including 7 times in 'team spirit'/'cooperative spirit' (团队/合作精神), 4 times in 'dedication spirit' (敬业精神) and 1 time in 'inventive spirit' (创新精神). There was also a character (责) which appeared 10 times in collocations that meant 'responsibility'—including 6 times as part of 'responsible heart' (责任心), 3 times as part of 'responsible' (负责) and 1 time as part of 'responsible feeling' (责任感). These frequent words indicated that heart and soul, team spirit, dedication and a strong sense of responsibility were highly desirable qualities expected of translation students.

Several other words appeared to be quite frequent too, including 6 appearances of 'work pressure' (压力), 5 appearances each of 'bitterness' (苦), 'enthusiastic' (积极) and 'outgoing' (开朗), 4 appearances each of 'honest' (诚

实 or 踏实) and ‘diligent’ (认真), and 3 appearances each of ‘motivated’ (主动), ‘dedicated to career’ (敬业), and ‘character’ (性格). Use of these words signalled the attention given to the personality and characters of applicants as compared to qualifications and competencies. Use of the adjectives (e.g., enthusiastic, outgoing, diligent, motivated and dedicated) signified the kind of qualities desired of successful candidates. The nouns (e.g., bitterness and work pressure) were used in conjunctions such as ‘ability to eat bitterness’, ‘ability to overwhelm bitterness’ and ‘ability to endure work pressure’. So they also concerned those desirable attitudes or characters expected of translation students.

### ***The look and others***

Surprisingly, the look of a candidate is of concern to some of the prospective employers. A ‘good look’ (外貌 or 形象) is stated 4 times in the advertisements. Three other advertisements specifically require applicants to send in their portraits, presumably due to the same concern. There is also one citation of a ‘professional look’ (职业形象), which is understandable especially if it is meant to be synonymous to dress code. As physical look is not a common requirement even with Chinese employers and it is definitely beyond the domain of professional requirement in Australia, this finding did not receive any further attention in my survey.

### ***An advertisement with one of the most stringent requirements***

As an example, I reprint the requirement stated in the advertisement by Laiyu Management Consulting, which offered a ¥100,000 annual salary (the highest pay recorded in Chinese Sample I) for a position of a technical translator/word engineer.

*A bachelor's degree in information, automation, software engineering or English, minimum three years of work experiences in IT, minimum two years of experiences in English writing, excellent expression in English and Chinese writing and speaking, excellent communication skills, active and aspiring for*

*excellence, good problem solving skills, clear thinking and own good vision, familiarity with software development and with XML/Java and with office software including Adobe and Microsoft.*

## **Corroboration by Chinese sample II**

The 12 advertisements of Chinese sample II sought talents to fill a range of professional translation vacancies (e.g., medical, chemical, geographical and philosophical translation etc.). They apparently shared a common structure and reflected the same requirement and expectation, which was understandable as they were authored by the same translation agency. I will present the extract of one of them after this paragraph as a sample to facilitate a brief upcoming discussion of the keywords. If any interested readers would like to get a big picture of the whole sample, they would only have to multiply the word count by 12 times. Following is the requirement segment of an advert seeking a medical translator.

*Basic requirements: 1) Bachelor minimal degree, major in medical English or medical discipline; 2) Having medical discipline knowledge; 3) Perfect in medical discipline English; 4) Level 6 certificate in English, 5 years or more of translation experience, good English comprehension competence and Chinese articulation competence; 5) Having an academic spirit, loving translation, diligent, not impulsive, punctual, reliable and cooperative.*

In this extract, ‘English’ and ‘discipline’ each appeared 4 times, ‘translation’ and ‘competence’ each 2 times. ‘Medical/medicine’ also appeared 4 times but it made no appearance in the other 11 advertisements and therefore its frequency was one-off. Other words that appeared only once in this extract but also appeared in the other eleven advertisements include ‘bachelor’, ‘degree’, ‘major’, ‘level 6 certificate’, ‘comprehension’, ‘Chinese articulation’, ‘5 years’, ‘experience’, ‘an academic spirit’, ‘loving’, ‘diligent’, ‘not impulsive’, ‘punctual’, ‘reliable’ and ‘cooperative’.

Analysis of the keywords largely corroborated the findings made on the basis of Chinese Sample I. Again much greater attention was given to English proficiency and qualifications (including degree and certificate) than to translation. Furthermore, ‘discipline’ always appeared in conjunction with

medical English or medicine but not with translation while ‘translation’ appeared either in conjunction with ‘experience’ or as the object of the transitive verb ‘loving’. This seemed to me to reflect an association of English with disciplinary training and a perception of translation as an experience. And again great attention was given to specialised disciplinary knowledge. Each vacancy advertised in Chinese Sample II targeted very specific disciplines. As in Chinese Sample I, attention was given to Chinese language, especially good articulation in Chinese. With regard to professionalism, there was no evidence of attention given to ‘accuracy’, ‘equivalence’, ‘faithfulness’, ‘impartiality’ and the like even though work attitudes did matter.

The findings of Chinese Sample II deviated from those of Sample I in relation to *can do* (能力), communication, people skills, technology expertise and the like. It would seem to me that the translators described in Sample II were intended to fall into the traditional category. They must be well educated in English and/or another academic discipline, be proficient in English (and Chinese) and have a number of positive personal attributes. They do little else other than engage in sedentary translation and translate by hand from one language to another. They are not required to do much else, or communicate to the outside world, or to service clients, or to relate to colleagues.

### What about the Australian sample?

It would not be reasonable or realistic to make meaningful generalisations on the basis of the small Australian sample, consisting of two advertisements by mining companies, 2 advertisements by a law firm and a translation agency and two repeats by the latter. Nevertheless, I present a brief word count, which appears to be more or less consistent with that of Chinese Sample I. ‘Experience’ recorded the highest frequency, with 5 appearances. ‘NAATI’, the national accreditation authority for translators and interpreters, and ‘communication’ were the next most frequent words, each with 4 appearances. In addition to ‘communication’, there were 2 instances of ‘interpersonal skills’. With regard to NAATI, only one advert required accreditation and only at the paraprofessional level whereas the other three regarded a NAATI accreditation only as an advantage. Words signifying specialized disciplinary knowledge recorded 4 appearances, include 2 for ‘construction’ and 2 for ‘engineering’. ‘English’ appeared 3 times in descriptions where speaking and/or writing in the

language was emphasized. Notably, jargons such as ‘accuracy’, ‘equivalence’, ‘faithful’ and ‘truthful’ were again absent. Following is an extract of one of the advertisements, which describes the kind of capacities required:

- *Understanding of construction terminologies*
- *Strong verbal and writing skills (in English and Mandarin)*
- *Strong communication and interpersonal skills*
- *Extensive translating and interpreting experience in the construction field is an advantage*
- *NATTI accreditation is an advantage.*

In short, the very few job vacancies available in Australia offered opportunities not for highly specialized dedicated translators but rather for general-purpose bilingual speakers with a range of other knowledge, capacities and experiences. In other words, they were quite comparable to the job vacancies posted in the Chinese sample.

### Conclusion and reflections

This survey made two major findings. Finding No 1 was that career opportunities for dedicated specialist translators were very scanty and limited in Australia and comparatively more plentiful in China. Finding No 2 was that, where there were vacancies, they primarily targeted non-dedicated specialist translators especially in China and Australia, that a wide range of capacities in addition to translation was required of candidates, that some of the additional capacities were seen as even more important than translation competence and that a number of matters of prominent concern in the traditional discourse of translation (e.g., accuracy) were not that relevant to the industry. Additional capacities given attention to by the industry included English, communication, ability to perform and get things done, people skills and familiarity with office equipment.

What did the survey findings say? They said many things with regard to the three types of needs listed in a beginning section of this paper: the need of the education export industry, the need of the student population and the need of the educators. In relation to the need of the education export industry, the findings questioned the sustainability and justification of the many specialist

Chinese English translation programs with huge enrolments especially in Australia (and internationally) and to certain extent also in China. There was a case for arguing that many of the existing programs should be reinvented to incorporate a greater component in bilingual and multimedia communication and to facilitate double degree or double major education. In relation to the need of students aspiring for a Chinese English translator's career, the findings said that anyone aspiring for a decent translation career in Australia (and comparable countries) must be prepared for a very negligible and mean market. More realistically, they should look to China and contemplate a career in that fast growing country. In this latter case, they should be prepared to accept the remunerations, responsibilities and work conditions of those available jobs however unsatisfactory they may seem. More importantly, they should be prepared to become a new species of translators with a range of capacities not expected of their predecessors. As to those students who aspired for a permanent visa to stay in Australia via accreditation as a professional translator, they must consider if a lean uninspiring career future was too high a price to pay.

As to the need of the educators to train great translators, I have more to say about this in the capacity of a teacher. The survey findings present a case for changing many of the practices commonly accepted as the norm. Top on the list of practices to be changed is the ideal of shaping a significant proportion of our students into the model of the great translators of yesterday (and perhaps today), who work indoor usually in a sedentary position, struggle day and night, heart and soul with the source and target texts. Also to be reformed are translation lessons and tests (including accreditation tests found in Australia and China) where students are expected to do little else other than 'read and translate' (Davis 2004), where they tackle a couple of short source texts provided, write out a translation with a pen on a paper, without any modern research or reference tools except a couple of hardcopy dictionaries, and where nothing other than accuracy, faithfulness and elegance matters. I agree with (Massey, 2005, Presas, 2000) that translation involves a diverse range of interdisciplinary skills and knowledge, including: knowledge of languages, subject matter and real-world knowledge, research skills and qualities such as creativity and problem-solving strategies. Informed by the findings of the present survey, I believe that translation in the real modern work entails many additional capacities. We may leave many of these other capacities to be dealt with in other non-translation programs or to be picked up by the students

themselves. But is it not better if we can incorporate, converge and fuse these other capacities into the teaching of translation? I revisit an observation made earlier.

*Ideally the teaching/learning of translation should reach outwardly to authors, readers, users, the market, and peer translators. Inwardly it should reach into the self to tap the student's hopefully ever-growing cognitive and physical resources. As teachers, we must also be prepared to reach out to connect with the cognitive capacities, learning histories, experiences, individuality, personality and aspirations of our students.*

(Zhong 2011: 372)

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