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Educating a Multilingual Workforce in Chinese universities: Employability of Master of Translation and Interpreting Graduates

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Abstract. This article examines the employability of Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) graduates in China, where globalized exchanges have led to an increasing need for translation education in recent decades. To that end, we have surveyed all the MTI alumni that graduated between 2015 and 2020 from one first-tier university in Shanghai using a questionnaire based on a comprehensive employability measurement model. By processing the collected questionnaire data in a quantitative manner, we illustrate the industrial distribution of the employed MTI graduates and identify the core assets constituting their employability needed to work in different industries. Via comparisons between our inquiry results and the current enrollment and curricular design of MTI programs, we further argue that the actual market for MTI graduates is experiencing a surplus and that MTI curricula have not completely met the employability requirements in various industries and professions. The conclusion herein implies a nationwide revision of China's MTI programs, which may include the control of student enrollment and updated syllabuses catering to the employability requirements in China's workplaces.
Keywords: translation education, MTI programs in China, graduate employment/employability

[ch] 中国高校的翻译人才培养：MTI毕业生就业力调查

摘要：近年来，随着国际交流的日益频繁深入，各国对于翻译人才培养的需求也相应增多。在这样的背景下，本研究基于就业力这一概念，实证调查中国高校翻译人才的培养成效。为此，我们对中国东部某高校2015至2020年间获取翻译硕士专业学位（MTI）的毕业生发放了基于综合性就业力测量模型的问卷，并以量化方法处理了回收的数据，确定了翻译人才从事不同行业工作所需的核心就业力成分。研究发现，目前中国高校培养的翻译硕士规模大于市场需求，同时MTI课程设置与相关行业工作岗位所需的多种就业力成分没有完全匹配。因此，文本认为中国的翻译硕士培养体系需要从招生规模、课程设计上进行改善。
关键词：翻译人才培养；中国翻译硕士教育（MTI）；就业力

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1. Introduction

Translation education plays a critical role in preparing multilingual employees, who are instrumental in helping government organizations and business corporations interact with their global counterparts in many contexts, such as China. As China's market and culture continuously integrate into to the international landscape, a considerable challenge emerges: the government needs to train "a dedicated group of translators and interpreters" to present "what China has to offer in a more accessible and acceptable manner" (Wu & Chen, 2019). Despite the "remarkable" development of translation education in the past decades (Caminade & Pym, 1998) in the aspects of educational philosophy and training methods, few studies have evaluated to what extent translation programs have prepared their graduates with the multilingual skills and nonlinguistic competences needed for actual practice in the language services market from the perspective of employability.

For this reason, we conducted this inquiry to investigate the employment status and core employability assets of the Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) graduates from a university in China. We will start by introducing a

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measurement model that was developed based on previous research in translation education. In the next section, we will report on our inquiry and reveal the results regarding the current employment of MTI graduates. Finally, with the research findings, we will evaluate whether current MTI programs have well met China's workplace reality, and we will provide a further discussion.

2. Translation Education and Its Research

Although translation activities have been practiced for over 3000 years, the history of institutionalized translation education dates back only about a century. Before that turning point, the notion of translation education originally operated in informal settings where translators were trained basically through trial and error, and "did not assume any professional or academic standing or structure" (Caminade & Pym, 1998). In the early 1930s, institutionalized translator training programs as we know today were first set up in Europe and the US (Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017). In China, translation had been used mainly as a tool to teach a foreign language through grammar translation within the Liberal Arts tradition until the late 1970s (Tao, 2016). In 1979, the Ministry of Education designated translation as an independent, compulsory course for foreign language majors as part of the national educational reform to linguistically accommodate China's Reform and Opening Up policy. Thereafter, translation programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels were launched within the tertiary education system (Tao, 2016). In 2007, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council approved the establishment of Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) programs oriented toward China's need for professional, sophisticated translation services in the globalized market. As Tao (2016) elaborated, "the MTI programme aims to train high-caliber and professionally competent translators and interpreters who master translation and/or interpretation skills, who possess a wide range of knowledge and who are capable of handling tasks involving different domains". At present, MTI programs are offered at more than 250 higher education institutions across the country.

The advancement of the institutionalization of translation education during the past decades has also provided an impetus for the burgeoning dedication to relevant research, with the most productive academic subfields being education philosophy and training methods (Yan et al., 2015).

Education philosophy addresses teaching guidelines and "what to teach" in translator and interpreter training (Kelly & Way, 2007). For example, Delisle (1998) highlighted the importance of having specific, achievable objectives in training programs. Kiraly (2000) identified that a shared, primary goal of all kinds of translation programs is to "allow every student to function within the language mediation community upon graduation". Donovan (2011) also paid attention to the ethics in translation education. Studies have also examined the reform of translation education as large-sized translation programs were introduced in Germany (the European Master's in Translation) (Schjoldager et al., 2008), Spain (the Bologna Process) (Nord, 2005), and China (MTI) (Xu, 2000; Li, 2002; Tao, 2010). They pointed out the need to tailor translation programs to the changing social and economic contexts and called for scientific, systematic guidance based on sufficient field research.

Additionally, many studies have assessed theoretical concerns and adopted frameworks from a variety of disciplines to address translation education. These frameworks include functional theories in translation studies (Nord, 1988, 1991; Tao, 2010), text type (Chen, 2010) and discourse theory (Boyd & Monacelli, 2010) in linguistics, social constructivism (Kiraly, 2000, 2006) in learning and cognitive theories, meta-communication (Viaggio, 2005) in communication theories, etc.

The literature on the training methods answers the question of "how to teach" in translation education (Kelly & Way, 2007). Studies within this category have been interacting with three pedagogical turns in translator and interpreter training practice over recent years. One is the turn from focusing on teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness, as embodied in the proposal of the translator self-concept (Wang, 2003; Kiraly, 2006; Tan, 2008), the differentiation of translator competences (see Robinson, 1990; Garzone, 2000; Kim, 2006; PACTE, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2018), and the identification of learner factors with the help of the think-aloud protocol (Atari & Radwan, 2009) and eye-tracking experiments (Antunović & Pavlović, 2011). Another shift is from focusing on translation products to the translation process (Gile, 1995; Miao, 2006), tasks/projects (see Davies, 2004, 2005; Zhu, 2004; Kiraly, 2005), and situations (Vienne, 1994; Gouadec, 2003). Last but not least, there are increasing attempts to apply corpora (Wang, 2004; Yu, 2004; Laursen & Arinas Pellón, 2012), computer-assisted tools (CAT) (Sandrelli & Jerez, 2007), e-learning techniques (Moser-Mercer et al., 2005), and online resources (Xu & Wang, 2011) to translation education in response to the exponential modern technological advancement.

Regardless of the flourishing tendency of research on translation education, 'research and theorizing about translation teaching' are 'relatively new'(Williams, 2013: 113). There are still issues that have not been intensively explored or have even been overlooked. According to bibliometric data (Yan et al., 2015), among all the articles on translation education from the world's major translation and interpreting (T&I) journals published in the 21st century, only 10% have ventured into assessing the effectiveness of translation education. Even within this limited number of studies, about three-quarters of them are restrained to "classroom assessment". The employment of students in the labor market, which, as Kiraly (2000) stated, is the primary goal of translation programs (especially for programs with specific professional orientations such as MTI programs), is obviously neglected.

This lack of understanding of the employment of students of translation programs has therefore motivated us to probe how well translation programs have cultivated students' employability. Since translation education is "shifting from the traditional focus on literary translation toward a more practical orientation" in various fields (Wu & Chen, 2019), a better understanding of the effectiveness of translation programs represented by student employment is necessary for us to make educational adjustments to meet the current expectations of the labor market. To that end, we have developed a measurement model based on previous studies on employability in translation education, and then applied the model to an inquiry at a Chinese university to examine MTI students' employment. The measurement model will be introduced in the following section.

3. Employability in Translation Education

The concept of employability, originally developed within the economic and political discourse, can be approached from multiple angles in educational research and employment assessment today (Guilbert et al., 2015). For example, the higher-institutional perspective has focused on analyzing graduates' and students' employability and subsequently boosting it through curricular design (see Bennett et al., 1999; Harvey, 2002; Knight & Yorke, 2004, 2006; Su & Zhang, 2015; Rees, 2019). In addition, from the individual perspective, scholars attached importance to supervisors' (Heijden & Bakker, 2011), students'/graduates' (see Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Rothwell et al., 2008; Reamdonck et al., 2011; Rahmat et al., 2012; Helyer & Lee, 2014), and employers' (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Association for Talent Development, 2019) perception of the capacities, skills, and attributes to optimize individuals' career trajectories. These diverse studies have agreed on essentially defining employability as an employment potential consisting of a comprehensive set of understandings, competencies, skills, psycho-cognitive attributes, and character traits, which can be maintained and enhanced through training.

Turning specifically to the scope of translation education, references should be made to the following projects and papers establishing indicators to exclusively measure the employment potential of a qualified translator within changing social and economic contexts. For example, with two-decade-long experiments on professional translators and translation teachers, the research group Process of Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation (PACTE) (2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2018) in Spain differentiated six translation competences that contribute to translators' professional performance, which include bilingual, extralinguistic, instrumental, strategic, and psycho-physiological subcomponents and knowledge about translation. Rotheneder (2007), taking into account the technological advancement in both translation and teaching practice, suggested that translation students' employability rests on the following pillars: subject-specific skills, translation management and technology, transferable skills, reflection, and personal development planning. The collaborative EU-funded project OPTIMALE (2012) assembled a list of translation-related abilities identified by employers in the industry. The top four are the ability to produce quality texts, the ability to define and apply quality procedures, knowledge of specialized domains, and awareness of occupational ethics and standards. By surveying executives actively involved in the recruitment of translation graduates in Spain, Schnell and Rodríguez (2017) proposed disciplinary knowledge, generic competences, and personal attributes as three general parts of employability, and these parts were coupled with 34 specific assets. Based on translation job descriptions and translator training programs in the Arab world, Al-Batineh and Bilali (2017) verified the seven competences put forward by Kelly (2005) from a curricular design standpoint, i.e., communicative and textual, cultural and intercultural, subject area, professional and instrumental, strategic, interpersonal, and attitudinal competences. In addition, there are other studies that cover a range of heterogeneous stakeholders of translator education and employment, consisting of institutions (see Pym, 2003; Kelly, 2005; de Céspedes, 2017; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017), teachers (Peverati, 2013), students/graduates (CIUTI-study, 2014; Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017), alumni (Cuminatto et al., 2017), and translation service practitioners (Li, 2007; Katan, 2009; Rosendo & Diur, 2017).

We have categorized the competences, skills, and assets from all the aforementioned studies and integrated them into one measurement model for employability, as presented in Table 1.

Disciplinary-specific competences can be regarded as a combination of aptitudes, capacities, and expertise at play when performing translation tasks in a professional setting (Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017). In translation studies, closely related to the notion of disciplinary-specific competences are translation or translator competences, which constantly evolve alongside technological innovations and market needs. In this study, we focus on five subcompetences for written translation as conceptualized by PACTE (2005, 2008, 2018): language competence, described in terms of 'reading comprehension in the source language and written production in the target language'; cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence, described in terms of 'the mobilization in translation of knowledge about the source and the target cultures, universal world knowledge, and specialized knowledge of specific fields'; instrumental competence, described in terms of 'the use of documentation resources (such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, style books, etc.) and technological tools (such as electronic corpus, translation software, CAT tools, etc.)'; knowledge about translation services, described in terms of 'the declarative knowledge of the profession of translation service, including program management, market needs, target audiences, relevant legal and financial knowledge for the industry, etc.'; and strategic competence, described in terms of 'the procedural knowledge to coordinate other subcompetences and develop strategies to solve problems in the translation process in relation to the final purpose'.

Table 1. Comprehensive Measurement Model for Employability

Components	Subcomponents
Disciplinary-specific competences	Language competence
	Cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence
	Instrumental competence
	Knowledge about translation service
	Strategic competence
Transferable generic competences	Interpersonal and communicative competence
	Teamwork competence (willingness to cooperate, management and organizing skills)
	Autonomy
Personal attributes	Sense of responsibility
	Initiative
	Flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges
	Emotional intelligence (confidence, open-mindedness, and empathy)
	Self-evaluation/criticism
	Ethical/moral quality
Practical experience	-

In contrast to disciplinary-specific competences, transferable generic competences are not restricted to a particular disciplinary or occupational area, but rather are assumed to potentially transfer to any discipline and workplace (Bennett et al., 1999; Rotheneder, 2007; Peverati, 2013). Three disciplinary-specific competences, as multiple quantitative empirical studies testify (Su & Zhang, 2015; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017; Association for Talent Development, 2019; Gong, Gao, Li, & Lai, 2020), turn out to have the most significant impact among others: interpersonal and communicative competence (both orally and in writing with superiors, colleagues, and customers), teamwork competence (including willingness to cooperate, management and organizing skills), and autonomy (ability to learn and work in an independent manner).

Personal traits and behaviors, also known as soft skills in employment settings, are what keeps people motivated, capable of regulating and reasoning about emotions in working relationships, and open to intellectual and emotional growth (Knight & Yorke, 2006; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Likewise, according to previous studies (Su & Zhang, 2015; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017; Association for Talent Development, 2019), the most quantitatively recognized personal attributes at the workplace are the sense of responsibility, initiative, flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges, emotional intelligence (including confidence, open-mindedness, and empathy), self-evaluation/criticism, and ethical/moral quality.

Work practice or internships, as links between education and the world of work, can provide job seekers with opportunities to identify and develop the key competences for a profession, and can also facilitate access to the information and resources in the industry (Helyer & Lee, 2014). Therefore, both employers and job seekers agree that practice experience can be transformed into employability.

In short, this measurement model incorporates the components/subcomponents specific to translators' employability, which we argue are highly desirable for students of any institutionalized education program to develop for employment upon graduation. Starting from the premise that MTI graduates' employability largely depends on whether they have acquired the competencies, skills and assets in our model upon graduation, we conducted an inquiry to examine the employment of MTI education graduates.

4. The Inquiry

Our research sets out to answer the following question:

> What is the current employment status of MTI graduates in China?

To address the question, we distributed a questionnaire to MTI students that graduated from 2015 to 2020 from a Chinese university. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of our comprehensive measurement model for

employability. This questionnaire will not only survey their job choices upon graduation, but elicit how they valued different components of employability in a quantified manner. After the questionnaire collection, we categorized our respondents into three groups according to their jobs and the industries of their professions, and charted the numerical distributions of the three groups. For the employability measurement, we processed the original data collected from the questionnaire with mathematical operations for each group to identify the core components/subcomponents constituting graduates' employability. Furthermore, we interviewed some respondents (who were willing to accept a return visit) to examine why they had valued these core components/subcomponents for employment.

4.1. Questionnaire Design

Since job descriptions are not only a benchmark for selection during recruitment but for the assessment whether employees meet the working standards of an industry (Kelly, 2005; Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017), it was requested that the questionnaire be completed according to the actual business descriptions of respondents' first jobs right after graduation. Its questions were divided into six sections and there was also an open-ended question. Section one captured respondents' basic personal and employment information, including their positions, the business profiles of their host companies and institutions, etc. Sections two to five sought to respectively determine the items of the four employability components at play in their employment and professional practice. The questions in these sections were answered on a five-point Likert scale. For example, 'My job requires me to master such technological tools as electronic corpus, translation software, CAT tools, etc. (*1=strongly disagree;5=strongly agree*)'. In section six, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of the four general components of employability (from 1 to 5) to their work in general, and give reasons to justify their ratings. Last but not least, the open-ended question aimed to elicit certain novel, supplementary employability assets, if any, that they deemed to be indispensable in China's idiosyncratic context but were neglected in our measurement model. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to leave their contact information if they were willing to accept a second visit.

    Before sending the questionnaire out, we invited the staff members of the career advisory office at University T to modify the content, delivery, and rationality of the questions. Then, we conducted a pilot study on 20 of our participants (10 English-Chinese MTI graduates and 10 German-Chinese graduates from the Class of 2020) to test the reliability and validity and the data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 (IBM, USA). The internal consistency reliability of the study was tested using Cronbach's α. The final internal consistency reliability was 0.823 (Cronbach's α >0.7). To test the validity, the KMO sample adequacy measure was used, and the final KMO value was 0.798 (KMO >0.6). These indicators showed that the questionnaire had good reliability and validity.

4.2. Participants

With the help of the alumni office, we tried to target all 166 MTI graduates from the Classes of 2015 to 2020 at a major Chinese university in east China (University T), and sent them the questionnaire over WeChat, a social media app in China, on March 15th, 2020. In the following two weeks, a total of 142 respondents accessed the questionnaire. Among these 142 submitted questionnaires, 131 answers were valid, and thus the final response rate was approximately 79%.

4.3. Data processing

Based on their jobs and the industries of their professions, our respondents were categorized into three groups, and the detailed employment information of each group was stored in separate Excel 2010 spreadsheets. Then, we calculated the number of respondents in each group and charted their industrial distribution. Regarding the detailed employability measurement, we analyzed the respective data from the three respondent groups so that the results on employability in our study were industrially meaningful. To assess the overall importance attached to the four general components of employability, we charted the numbers of MTI graduates with varied ratings. In addition, for the subcomponents, we differentiated the impact of every single item in each respondent group using variable importance in projection (VIP) scores (VIP >1) in a partial least squares-discriminant analysis (PLS-DA) model based on the values (1 to 5) ascribed to them in the questionnaire answers. The mathematical operations were performed in SIMCA 14.0 (Umetrics AB, Sweden). After running the mathematical operations, we ranked all the subcomponents of employability according to their VIP scores. In our PLS-DA model, if a variable/subcomponent of employability has a VIP score greater than 1, it can be considered to be important. Otherwise, the subcomponent can be a good candidate for exclusion from our consideration.

5. Results and Analyses

In this section, we will illustrate the current employment status of MTI graduates from two angles. To begin with, we will present the industrial distribution and the subsequent grouping of the surveyed MTI graduates. Furthermore, we will provide quantitative descriptions of the employability measurement for the three participant groups, in terms of the importance

attached to the different components of employability and the impact rank of the subcomponents of employability. For each participant group, we will also explain why some components and subcomponents are more influential than others.

5.1. Industrial Distribution of MTI Graduates

According to the respondents' profiles, the 131 valid participants studied written translation in graduate school. They were all native Chinese speakers. A total of 58 of them had English as their first foreign language, and 73 of them had German as their first foreign language.

As illustrated in Figure 1 and Table 2, in their first contact with the labor market, only 13% of these MTI graduates (17 respondents) were employed as translators for government offices (4 respondents), public/state-owned/private/foreign organizations (10 respondents), and translation agencies (3 respondents). Another 49% of the MTI graduates (64 respondents) held a wide range of foreign language-related positions, including English/German teachers (36 respondents) in middle schools and training centers, text editors and reviewers in media agencies and publishing houses (12 respondents), and linguistic and cultural mediators/product managers/operating officers/marketing personnel/freelancers in the language service industry (15 respondents). Last, 38% of the participants (50 respondents) had jobs that involved no translation or foreign language at all. They worked as public servants in government offices (9 respondents), staff members in higher education institutions (6 respondents), clerks and managers in banks and other financial institutions (10 respondents),and employees in various other industries (25 respondents in e-commerce, real estate, manufacturing industries, etc.).
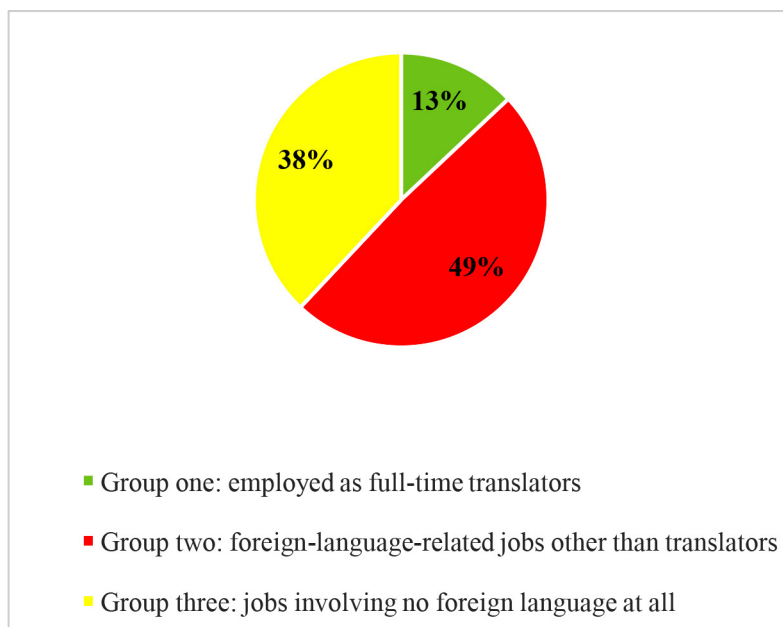

- ■ Group one: employed as full-time translators
- ■ Group two: foreign-language-related jobs other than translators
- ■ Group three: jobs involving no foreign language at all

Figure 1. The Three Participant Groups and Their Proportions

Table 2. Industrial Sectors of the Three Participant Groups

Grouping	Industries of professions	Number	Total
Employed as full-time translators	Government offices	4	17
	Public/state-owned/private/foreign organizations	10	
	Translation agencies	3	
Foreign language-related jobs other than translators	Foreign language education	36	64
	Media agencies and publishing houses	12	
	Language service industry (linguistic and cultural mediators/product managers/operating officers/marketing personnel/etc.)	15	
Jobs involving no foreign language at all	Government offices	9	50
	Staff members of higher education institutions	6	
	Banks and other financial institutions	10	
	Other industries (e-commerce, real estate, manufacturing industries, etc.)	25	

5.2. Employability Measurement of MTI Graduates Employed as Full-Time Translators

As shown in Figure 2, the 17 translators (100%) in this respondent group unanimously rated disciplinary-specific competences as 'important' and above, with nearly 1/3 of the votes for 'very important'. Transferable generic competences and personal attributes came next. Both categories had 16 votes (94%) for 'important' and above. The ratings were subsequently justified by the respondents' career planning experience given. Unequivocally, in professional fields meeting their academic background, graduates' specific competences in translation are the decisive factor for them to get hired in the first place. In addition to translation competences, generic professional capacities and personal traits are also essential to shaping the longer careers of the graduates. Comparatively, practical experience received the least attention. Only 9 respondents (53%) considered it 'important' and above. 7 MTI graduates (41%) did not even view it important at all because their jobs did not require any relevant work placement concerning translation.
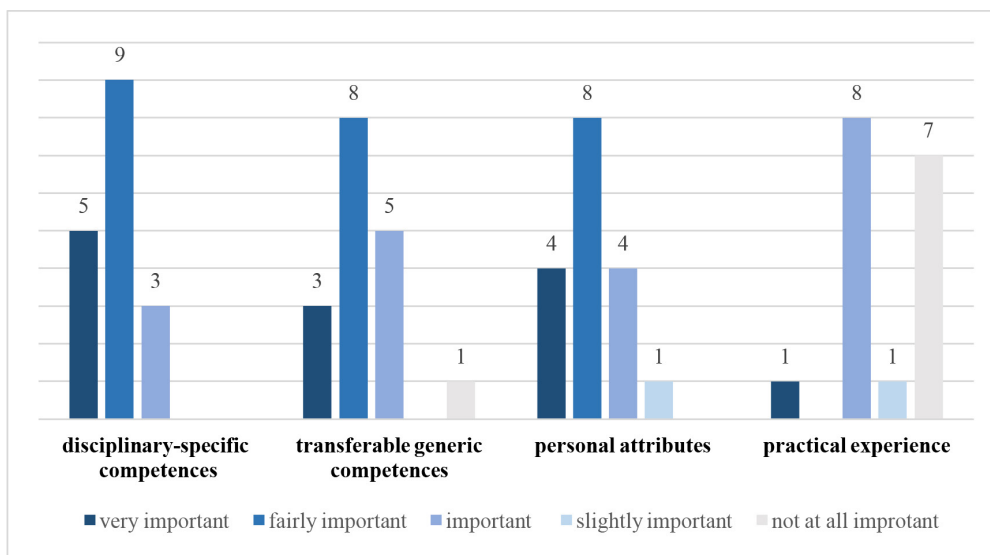

Figure 2. Importance Attached to the Four Components of Employability: Group One

According to Table 3, the core assets for MTI graduates employed as translators are ethical/moral quality; instrumental competence, cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence, teamwork competence; language competence, strategic competence, autonomy, and flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges because their corresponding VIP scores are greater than 1. As our return visits show, government offices and translation agencies have definite professional codes for translators whose duties are to bridge communicative gaps between different parties. A strongly defined work ethic for them ensures the faithfulness, accuracy, and confidentiality of the texts. Ethical/moral quality is especially vital in regard to translating government documents, legal instruments, and technical and medical texts. The quantified results of disciplinary-specific competences conform to respondents' general perception demonstrated in Figure 1. The only exception is knowledge about translation services, which unexpectedly comes in last in our list. Through the return visits, we found a possible explanation. Government offices, state-owned companies, and other organizations (except translation agencies) do not need a systematic, market-orient translation service department. Translation is only subordinate to their major business. Usually, organizations would recruit very limited numbers of full-time translators and outsource the extra translating work. In these situations, autonomy and flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges are highly recognized because translators have to solve most problems on their own instead of working in coordinated teams. Additionally, a few respondents proposed some novel employability assets with ratings based their work experience. Nevertheless, since their VIP scores are significantly less than 1, we did not include them.

5.3. Employability Measurement of MTI Graduates With Foreign-Language-Related Jobs Other than Translators

Roughly speaking, the distributions of the respondents in the second group with different ratings for disciplinary-specific competences, transferable generic competences, and personal attributes are similar to those in the first group. As illustrated in Figure 3, 62 out of the 64 respondents (97%) still regarded their disciplinary competences as 'important' and above. In addition, 62 graduates (97%) rated transferable generic competences as 'important' and above, and 64 (100%) gave personal attributes the same credit, too. According to their following explanations, as long as the business involves some foreign language, their bilingual performance will still matter on a number of occasions, even if in a covert way. For example, although they do not directly producing translated texts, foreign language teachers may

(orally) translate language points and texts to be learned, and teach basic translation skills in the classroom. Additionally, international news editors may roughly translate and then re-edit foreign news stories for local broadcasting. On the other hand, again, generic professional capacities and personal traits influence graduates' long-term development at the workplace. For practical experience, only less than 50% of the respondents deemed it 'important' and above, asserting that their internships had enabled them to have an overview of the language service industry.

Table 3. Impact Ranking of the Subcomponents of Employability: Group One

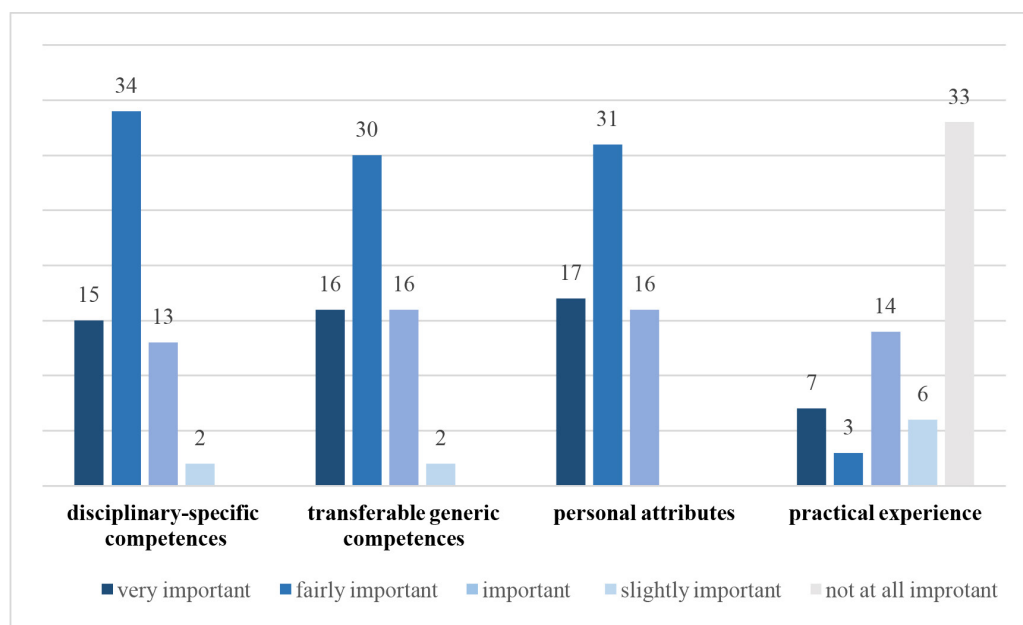| Subcomponents	VIP score
Ethical/moral quality	1.20055
Instrumental competence	1.13382
Cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence	1.12845
Teamwork competence	1.12234
Language competence	1.11761
Strategic competence	1.10339
Autonomy	1.09045
Flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges	1.08971
Initiative	0.956437
Practical experience	0.929591
Interpersonal and communicative competence	0.918917
Self-evaluation/criticism	0.885696
Sense of responsibility	0.875088
Emotional intelligence	0.797641
Knowledge about translation services	0.783316

Figure 3. Importance Attached to the Four Components of Employability: Group Two

As seen from Table 4, the following employability assets, with a VIP score over 1, will be at play when MTI graduates hold positions in foreign-language-related fields: instrumental competence, interpersonal and communicative competence, ethical/moral quality, teamwork competence, language competence, and career planning. Among these characteristics are two disciplinary-specific competences. It is understandable that linguistic competence matters for the members of this group. As explained above, their work, characterized by some foreign language, necessarily entails translation in one way or another. For instrumental competence, it stands out since today's working methods are deeply shaped by technological advancement. As verified in our return visits, the development of some

cutting-edge skills (including the access to diverse corpora, the use of search engines and multimodal knowledge bases, and the mastery of office software and other technological tools) will facilitate the task performance of employees in the language service industry. The core transferable generic competences for the second respondent group are interpersonal and communicative competence and teamwork competence, which, in turn, show the importance of coping with relationships at work. Additionally, ethical/moral quality, again, is highly valued as a personal attribute. In addition, we subsumed career planning as an extra employability asset (VIP score >1) for MTI graduates with foreign language-related work other than translation. While answering the open-ended question in the questionnaire, 42 respondent 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' on the importance of career planning to job search and retention. As informed by 18 of them available during the return visits, the more that employees' jobs met their long-term career planning, the longer they stayed at those jobs and in that particular organizations. From the angle of their employers, proper personnel stability will reduce recruitment costs and maintain overall work efficiency.

Table 4. Impact Ranking of the Subcomponents of Employability: Group Two

Subcomponents	VIP Score
Instrumental competence	1.98177
Interpersonal and communicative competence	1.92479
Ethical/moral quality	1.91488
Teamwork competence	1.22972
Language competence	1.20227
Career planning	1.13710
Practical experience	0.908797
Sense of responsibility	0.705517
Emotional intelligence	0.655964
Self-evaluation/criticism	0.365673
Autonomy	0.345459
Flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges	0.301949
Cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence	0.208603
Knowledge about translation service	0.165572
Initiative	0.107810
Strategic competence	0.106623

5.4. Employability Measurement of MTI Graduates with Jobs Involving No Foreign Language At All

In regard to the third group (Figure 4), the importance of specific translation and foreign language competences evidently declined as less than half of the 50 respondents (48%) thought that it 'important' and above. This decrease is legitimate since these graduates' occupations had nothing to do with translation or foreign language at all. By contrast, the importance of transferable generic competences and personal attributes still remained high. They both had 48 favoring votes (96%). This stable trend across the three respondent groups proves the transferability of the two relatively soft components of employability, regardless of professions and industries. With regard to practical experience, the respondents' opinions varied. For 22 graduates (44%), it was 'slightly' or 'not at all' important. Even though they had not had fitting internships in industries other than language services, they managed to get employed in various business fields eventually. However, the rest (54%) rated practical experience as 'important' and above, arguing that despite the lack of disciplinary and occupational relevance, work placement had helped them develop generic and soft skills before employment, and had psychologically prepared them.

As demonstrated in Table 5, if MTI graduates want to pursue careers in other industries than foreign language-related areas, their competitive edges (VIP score >1) will be their sense of responsibility, teamwork competence, autonomy, ethical/moral quality, language competence, interpersonal and communicative competence, decision-making, and stress tolerance. An interesting occurrence is that language competence still plays a role in the employability construction of the third respondent group. As explained in follow-up visits, the knowledge of some foreign language (especially English) has become a common, basic job requirement in almost every industrial sector for college graduates in China. They need to provide language certification that is professionally, industrially or nationally acknowledged in recruitment, even if it is rarely used in their actual work. But since these MTI graduates' disciplinary-specific competences have limited or little influence on their actual work, their transferable generic competences

and personal attributes become important. Since there are different ways of working in diverse industrial sectors, autonomy will be comparatively highlighted when the work is largely done in an independent manner, and teamwork and communicative competences will become prominent if employees perform most tasks cooperatively. Additionally, the sense of responsibility and ethical/moral quality turn out to be perpetual merits of qualified employees in any position or industrial sector. In addition, we subsumed decision-making and stress tolerance (VIP score >1) in the employability construction of the third respondent group. In the open-ended question part, 28 respondents 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' on the importance of decision-making as a generic ability, and they were mostly from the Classes of 2015 and 2016 with middle or high administrative positions at the workplace. For them, decision-making is an integral part of leadership, which may not exert an instant effect right after their recruitment but becomes increasingly notable along with promotions in the upcoming years. In addition, 22 respondents 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' that the high threshold for stress tolerance allows individuals to complete taxing tasks appropriately under mentally healthy conditions.
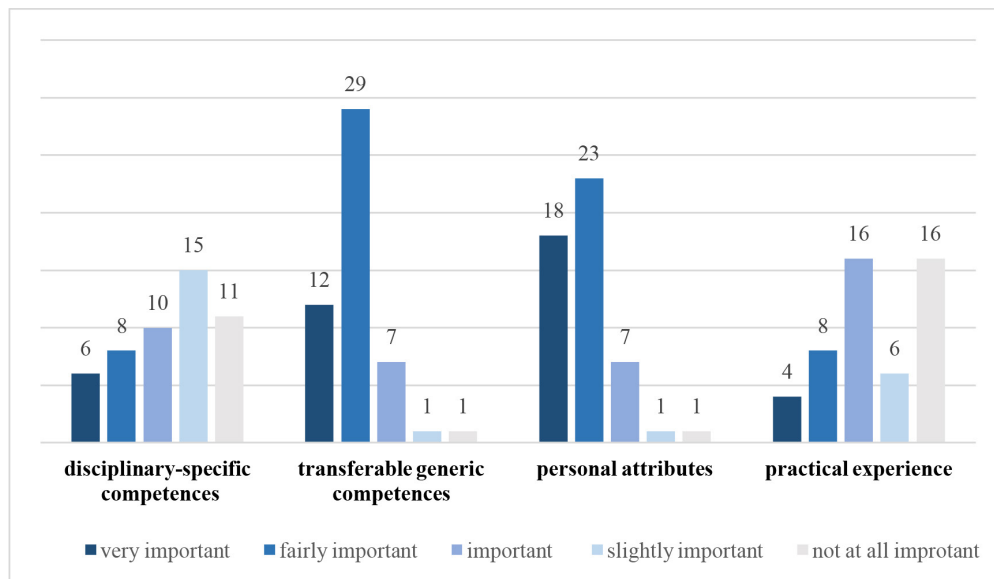

Figure 4. Importance Attached to the Four Components of Employability: Group Three

Table 5. Impact Ranking of the Subcomponents of Employability: Group Three

Subcomponents	VIP Score
Sense of responsibility	1.48359
Teamwork competence	1.31647
Autonomy	1.27288
Ethical/moral quality	1.15616
Language competence	1.14167
Interpersonal and communicative competence	1.11355
Decision-making	1.10820
Stress tolerance	1.05663
Initiative	0.992999
Emotional intelligence	0.946451
Instrumental competence	0.926636
Self-evaluation/criticism	0.837374
Cultural, world knowledge, and thematic competence	0.753831
Flexibility/adaptability to changes and challenges	0.739285
Strategic competence	0.714763
Knowledge about translation service	0.538341
Practice experience	0.399188

6. Discussion

The significance of the inquiry findings, revealing the employment status of MTI graduates, is to help us better explore the effectiveness of translation education in China. In this section, the foregoing employment data are used to further evaluate to what extent current MTI programs have fit China's workplace reality and prepared their graduates with the necessary employability.

Two comparisons have been made at both the macro and the micro levels. At the macro level, we have focused on the demand-supply relationship in translation education, and compared the actual market need for translators, as indicated by graduates' industrial distribution, and recent MTI student enrollment. At the micro level, the focal point is to see whether translation education has well prepared their graduates with the employability required in various industries of professions. Therefore, the comparison has been made between all the pivotal competences, skills, and assets identified in our inquiry and the curricular design of current MTI programs. At each level, we have found a mismatch.

6.1. Mismatch between Massive Student Enrollment and Actual Market Demand for Translators

The industrial distribution of the employed MTI graduates has reflected the surplus of translators from China's tertiary education system. As difficult as it is to believe that only 13% of the MTI graduates from University T in the past six years found jobs aligned with their academic background, this case is in fact representative of the current situation in general across the entire country. As reports issued by the Translators Association of China (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019) show, along with the country's college expansion starting at the turn of the millennium, the national MTI student enrollment per year has reached 10,000. In addition, the number of organizations mainly providing language services (translation included) increases annually by less than 90, most of which have less than 50 employees. Even worse, this mismatch between the translator supply and demand has caused the degree to be devalued among foreign language majors and their salaries to decrease in recent years.

The changing economic and social needs need to be accounted for in higher education planning, especially in terms of programs catering to the real work world, such as translator training (Olohan, 2007). After over a decade of booming results, it is probably time to reappraise the development scale of MTI programs and for educational policy makers, language planners, and universities themselves to downsize these programs.

6.2. Mismatch between Employability Requirements and Curricular Design of MTI Programs

The detailed employability analyses based on their actual job descriptions have given us a better understanding of the real-world expectations of MTI graduates. In a market with a surplus of translators, MTI students need to acquire a comprehensive set of assets to guarantee their employment within and outside the language industry. The asset set at least includes four disciplinary-specific competences (language, cultural/world knowledge/thematic, instrumental, and strategic competences), four transferable generic competences (interpersonal/communicative competence, teamwork, autonomy, and decision-making), and personal soft skills such as ethical/moral quality and sense of responsibility, complemented by career planning ability and mental health with a high tolerance threshold for stress.

Moreover, this model can be used to assess to what extent the MTI curricula have prepared the students for the market expectations of employability in China. Kelly (2005, p. 2) argued that the first stage of curricular design is to 'determine the institutional and social context in which training is to take place, and from there' formulate the learning objectives, the structure and contents of the training, the teaching approaches, and other elements of a particular discipline or program. When it comes specifically to translation education, as verified in multiple empirical studies (see PACTE, 2005, 2008, 2018; Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017; Cuminatto et al., 2017; de Céspedes, 2017; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017; Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017), competence/employability analyses of translators that necessarily entail market and industry needs will establish the point of departure for university programs to update their curricula.

After comparing the items of the employability set with the current curricular development of MTI programs in China, we found an unequivocal time lag between the two. *The Guidelines of MTI Program Construction* by the Ministry of Education released in 2007, which all the MTI curricula sets available in China need to strictly follow, originally specified three competences only (language competence, encyclopedic knowledge, and knowledge about translation services) in an ideal translator profile. Nonetheless, the decade-long evolving translation profession and its economic and social contexts at large have posed a serious challenge to responding to the changes of translators' employability in the macro design. Going from the macro to the micro, today's training contents of specific universities call for improvements, too. Taking the syllabus for the English-Chinese MTI program at University T (Appendix 1) as an instance, we found that most nondisciplinary competences are still underappreciated.

Therefore, we can conclude at least four pedagogical suggestions to better embed employability into the MTI curricula: the incorporation of 1) project-based learning or workshops that foster students' teamwork, communication, autonomy, and decision-making ability; 2) ethics training; 3) career planning instructions; and 4) mental health education.

7. Conclusion

To cope with the lack of understanding related to the employability of translation graduates, this article has explored the distribution of the employed MTI graduates in different industries, and identified the core assets constituting their employability needed to work in various industries of professions among graduates from one MTI program in a Chinese university. Based on the comparisons of our inquiry results with the student enrollment and curricular design of the MTI program, we have contended that current MTI programs have not yet well met China's workplace reality.

It is probably crucial to revise China's MTI programs at both the national and the institutional levels for "a dedicated group of translators and interpreters" to improve the communication between China and the globalized world "in a more accessible and acceptable manner" (Wu & Chen, 2019). At the national level, it is suggested that government offices such as the Ministry of Education, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council, and the China National Committee for Translation and Interpreting Education "restrict and reduce" the institutionalization of MTI programs and the student enrollment of existing ones (Xu et al., 2020), which should be based on sufficient employment data of MTI graduates indicative of the actual market demand for translation service. At the institutional level, MTI curricular adjustments are needed in universities to pay more attention to students' teamwork, communication, autonomy, decision-making ability, ethics education, career planning, and mental health development aside from the traditional emphasis merely on language mastery.

It should be noticed that the participants of this research are all from the same MTI program, and thus, the generalization and representativeness of our findings might be affected. For this reason, it is hoped that future studies will explore more MTI programs in China and similar programs in other contexts to verify and enhance our findings. Furthermore, continuing efforts are needed to work out how to control student enrollment and update the curricula of MTI programs based on China's market demand.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Courses for Our Surveyed MTI Program (in Alphabetic Order) and Corresponding Objective Employability Assets

Courses	Objective Employability Assets Embedded
Chinese Writing	Language competence
Dissertation	-
English Listening and Speaking	Language competence
General Translation for Different Types of Texts (Narrative, Descriptive, Expository, Argumentative, Instructional, etc.)	Language competence Strategic competence
Introduction to Chinese Culture	Cultural/world knowledge/thematic competence
Introduction to Cultures of English-Speaking countries	Cultural/world knowledge/thematic competence
Introduction to Translation Theories	Language competence
Machine and Computer-Assisted Translation	Instrumental competence
Second Foreign Language	Language competence
Work Placement	Practice experience
World Facts	Cultural/world knowledge/thematic competence
Academic Translation	Language competence Strategic competence
Cross-cultural Communication	Cultural/world knowledge/thematic competence Interpersonal/communicative competence
Economic-Financial Translation	Language competence Strategic competence
Legal Translation	Language competence Strategic competence
Linguistics	Language competence
Literary Translation	language competence Strategic competence
Localization	Instrumental competence
Multi-Modal (Audio-Visual) Translation	Language competence Strategic competence
Post-Editing and Technical Writing	Instrumental competence Strategic competence
Project Management	Knowledge about translation service Strategic competence Interpersonal/communicative competence Teamwork competence Autonomy
Scientific-Technical Translation	Language competence Strategic competence
Terminology	Instrumental competence Strategic competence