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*Article*

# A Case Study into Student Perceptions of the Value of a Practical Chinese to English Translation Module for Professionalisation and Employability

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**Abstract**

Translation has long been part of undergraduate language degrees, and its role has been widely discussed in recent years (Cook, 2007, 2010; Hubert, 2017). Webb (2010) has indicated employers' expectations of language graduates to possess translation skills, but there have as yet been few studies conducted into the role of Chinese translation modules in enhancing the professionalisation of language skills for undergraduate students of Chinese.

One UK final-year undergraduate module, Practical Chinese to English translation considered here, explicitly aims to serve, 'as a taster for those considering careers in translation and language services' (University of Leeds, 2017). In recent years, informal comments from students have hinted that they view this module as very useful for preparing them for future work with regards to the professionalisation of their language skills. However, no data is available as to whether this objective is actually perceived by students as being achieved, so this study set out to survey student perspectives in this regard, with the aim of further developing pedagogical approaches for greater student gains, and gaining wider insights for such training more broadly.

Survey results indicate the module's capacity to support student's development of a wide range of generic transferable skills, as well as comprehensively raising student's confidence in their own translation skills, that the module acts effectively as a taster and a bridge to such a vocational path, and the need for intentionality in developing IT skills, in particular with regards to the usage of basic machine translation tools.

It is concluded that there is evidence to support Starr and Hu's (2019) claim of the necessity of greater effort within Chinese undergraduate programmes for the intentional and disciplinary teaching of translation. Further studies would help to give clearer picture of gains experienced by alumni from having taken this and similar modules in other institutions to help guide the orientation of further module development.

**Keywords**

Undergraduate translation module, employability, professionalization, student perceptions, transferable skills

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## 1 Introduction

Translation has long been part of undergraduate language degrees, and its role in language teaching has been widely discussed in recent years (Cook, 2007, 2010; Hubert, 2017). Studies on the provision and features of Chinese–English Translation/Interpreting (CETI) have also not been lacking, but these have tended to focus on specialised translator training courses at postgraduate level (for example Zhong, 2018). There have as yet been few studies conducted into the role of Chinese translation modules in enhancing the professionalisation of language skills and employability for undergraduate students of Chinese. Given the increased emphasis on employability in UK HE in recent years, and the undisputed importance of ensuring students develop various and relevant skills during their undergraduate studies, ensuring that each undergraduate module has certain instrumental goals has become extremely important. This is especially true in the case of translation modules which, along with their capacity to support generic transferrable skills development, also contribute significantly to the development of specific vocational skills to be expected from language graduates. Whilst modules are thoughtfully designed to support programme goals, ascertaining the 'student voice' regarding whether these goals are actually achieved in specific modules is vital in efforts to ensure that goals are met for maximum student benefit and for the further enhancement of robust pedagogical methods. This is also particular relevant in the context of the present author's institution, where the student voice is actively solicited in the development of the institutional partnership for enhancing students' educational experiences (University of Leeds, 2021). This study aims to ensure that the student voice becomes more central to the provision of translation teaching and is then specifically referenced in the further development of this provision. As similar programmes and modules develop around the world, the present author would argue that ensuring student engagement will be a key component to their successful delivery and real-world vocational value.

## 2 Literature Review

Expectations of language-major programmes vary slightly from country to country, dependent on each country's specifical educational environment, history, and articulated priorities. In the UK, the QAA Benchmark Statement (2019) outlines the skills which employers, amongst others, can expect to find in language graduates in the UK, stating that, 'capability in languages is an asset for employability' (2019, p.3). Amongst the skills the Statement mentions which graduates from language degrees acquire, aside from 'receptive' and 'productive' skills, are 'mediation' skills (defined as translation and interpreting), although no explicit emphasis is given to the value of translation skills over the other aforementioned skills. The HEA Employability Review (2017), referencing Tyrer et al. (2013), has noted that there exists poor alignment between graduates' confidence and capability and employers' desires, indicating the importance for universities to ensure they maintain a constant grasp of the demands to be placed on students once they graduate and reach the world of work. In this regard, the QAA Benchmark Statement (2019) also notes that departments providing language courses are increasingly taking steps to ensure that the value of their modules for employability is made clear to students. How each institution approaches this clearly varies, but Ward's (2020) study highlights the importance of ensuring that this is done at the module level, and in particular in translation modules as this pertains to language degrees.

Inherent within all this is the need to define 'employability', at least as the word is interpreted by the present author, and there is disagreement within the broader body of literature on how precisely the term should be defined. Harvey (2001) provides a helpful overview of the various accepted definitions of the word, including 'the propensity of students to obtain a job', 'getting a job within a specified time after graduation', and 'an ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment' (p.98), amongst others, but makes clear that all available definitions fall short in some way. In the present study the last of these definitions outlined above, namely 'an ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point

of recruitment', most closely represents the interpretation of the term 'employability' utilised for the purposes of analysis and discussion.

Webb (2010, p.30) sets out from the firm conviction that it is 'generally acknowledged [that a] wide range of generic or transferrable skills [is] developed automatically through language learning' and conducted an employer survey of required skills in order to inform the further development of language programmes at (then) Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK. His study found that 92% of employers surveyed expected language graduates to undertake translations from the foreign language into English and vice versa, i.e., employers assumed language graduates would have acquired this type of mediation skills during their studies. In other words, in addition to generic skills developed in language programmes, it is expected of language graduates that they will possess strong mediation skills in their chosen language, and in particular translation skills.

Despite this, it is far from being the case that all UK universities offering BAs in Chinese offer modules overtly seeking to develop students' translation skills, raising the question of the extent to which modules on said programmes are developed with an eye on enhancing student employability. With regards specifically to Chinese language courses at UK universities, Starr and Hu (2019, p.470) noted in their study that when using literature for teaching Chinese, 'Most used translation to an extent, and developments in translation theory over the last few decades offer the chance to introduce students to a more consciously analytical and academic translation discipline, but there were *few signs of this happening*' [italics mine]. In other words, translation in a disciplinary and semi-professional sense is not being widely used as a major part of the undergraduate Chinese language curriculum, at least in the UK, despite the benefits which this can provide in terms of supporting Chinese language acquisition as well as valuable subject-specific employability skills. How intentionally development of these skills is supported on other language undergraduate degree programmes in the UK and elsewhere needs further examination, but as highlighted above these skills are not particularly prominent in the QAA Benchmark Statement (2019), so it could be argued that there is not yet the necessary strong sector-wide emphasis on these skills.

In light of the clear emphasis presented above regarding the value and importance of language graduates possessing translation skills, it is evident that translation could be better and more formally established on the undergraduate Chinese language curriculum nationally, and by extension internationally, and that doing so will offer strong support to the enhancement of employability skills. Just as Cook (2007, p.398) has noted, 'if lessons can be made more evidently relevant to outcomes and eventual use, they will be in turn more motivating', and whilst this is undoubtedly applicable to all modules, it is clearly particularly true of translation modules, given that in addition to supporting generic skills development, they also provide an avenue for the development of vocation-specific skills. It is also incumbent upon institutions that they teach Chinese for specific purposes, for failure to do so leaves them open to the charge of teaching Chinese for no purposes. Translation is evidently a crucial and prominent purpose deserving attention.

Indeed, in their study into developing employability skills in teaching translation to final-year students on language programmes, Anisimova and McNeilly (2021), in their UK- and Russia-based study, noted the positive impact said modules can have in developing both generic and subject-specific skills. However, they do not provide empirical evidence from the 'student voice' that said skills are actually being developed or are perceived by students themselves as being developed. Evidence is forthcoming, as in Brooman et al. (2015, p.663), that 'a closer alignment with the 'student voice' [can facilitate] the emergence of perceptions not revealed by usual feedback routes', and the effects student views can have on 'staff assumptions about the learning and teaching process'. Such evidence, if it were available with regards to translation modules on undergraduate Chinese language programmes, would help to inform the further development of such modules for the greater benefit of students and support the greater enhancement of employability skills development, not just in the UK but internationally too.

This study seeks to fill this important gap, by inviting the student voice into the further development of undergraduate Chinese translation modules to support greater student gains and enhanced employability.

## 3 Background and Research Questions

The module Practical Chinese to English Translation at the University of Leeds is an optional module offered in the last semester of the undergraduate Chinese degree programme. The majority of students on the programme study Chinese ab initio from year one, and as such the location of this module at the end of the degree programme is arguable rational, by providing the solid linguistic foundation necessary upon which a more disciplinary approach to translation can then be attempted, not bogged down by the need for time spent on basic issues of comprehension.

The module is slated in the institutional module catalogue as one which, 'can serve as a taster for those considering careers in translation and language services, but it will also be useful for those who do not intend to become translators, but who may occasionally be asked to translate as part of their work' (University of Leeds, 2017), and hence there is evidence of the intentionality of the module with regards to supporting student employability. It is an optional module, whereas its forerunner was a compulsory bi-directional translation and composition module with no stated emphasis on supporting employability, or translation theory, and so on. In other words, the module in question has been deliberately developed and presented in such a way as to build bridges between undergraduate studies of Chinese and student futures.

The module is comprised of an introductory lecture on the theory and practice of translation, followed by ten seminar sessions. Students prepare translations in groups or individually, and the class time is spent analysing texts and discussing different translation approaches and solutions. Various text types are covered during the module and prominent theoretical approaches are incorporated into the discussions to support robust solutions of translation challenges. Group work is a feature of the module and in one week's class there is a peer evaluation exercise where students work in groups to evaluate and give feedback on another group's translation based on the module criteria. The instructor also gives written feedback on group translations in this week, and on one other individual translation during the course of the semester. The individual feedback is followed up by one-to-one optional consultation slots which students can use to ask questions surrounding the feedback and the revised translation they are to submit before the consultation.

The assessment of the module is a 2-hour translation exam in a computer cluster under exam conditions. Students may use various off/online translation tools, but they may not use social media or communicate with anyone during the exam. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, classes have been conducted fully online since midway through the module in the 2019-20 academic year. Likewise, students have been required to complete the assessment task remotely in a 48-hour window, still with the requirement of not seeking assistance from another person to complete the task. As before, they must choose one of two texts to translate in accordance with the translation brief which they are provided.

The module has experienced consistently strong enrolment numbers since its inception, even though the majority of students enrolling started Chinese ab initio at the beginning of their degree programmes, which indicates both the level of Chinese attainable by the final year of the programme and the confidence of students to engage in a translation-focused module. In the 2020-21 academic year students were also invited to a talk by an alumnus currently taking a translation MA to learn more about the route to becoming a professional translator. Students have often commented verbally that this module is one of the most practical modules taken during their four-year degree programme and provides the connect between their language studies and future careers. In other words, they see the module as contributing significantly to the instrumental aspect of their programme. The above alumni talk was

added experimentally to see what additional benefits it may bring to students but was not examined by the present study.

In light of the heightened emphasis on employability in European higher education in recent years (Chouc & Calvo, 2010), it is evident that this module is well suited to the times, but as a ten-credit module garnering such apparent interest from students it could be argued that greater student gains, in particular in terms of employability skills enhancement should be targeted through the further expansion and development of the module. Apart from the generic module evaluation survey results, there is little specific data available on student perceptions of the module and its value, but in order to inform necessary developments of the module, and indeed modules like it in other institutions, in-depth empirical data specifically referencing employability skills, alongside a written snapshot of students' perceptions, is vitally important.

As a result of the above, the present study set out to ascertain how students perceive the link between this module and their careers, and the generic and subject-specific skills to which the module is perceived as contributing, with the overall aim of informing the further pedagogical development of this final year Chinese translation module, as supported by Brooman et al. (2015) above. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do students on the module perceive this Chinese to English translation module in the final year of the undergraduate programme as supportive of professionalisation and employability?
2. What insights from the 'student voice' can be acquired to inform the further development of the module in question and modules like it at other institutions?

## 4 Methodology

In order to answer these questions, two anonymous online surveys were conducted, one before teaching on the module commenced (January 2021; 11 questions), and the other after teaching concluded (May 2021;13 questions). The rationale for conducting two surveys in this case study was to seek to detect any notable changes in students' perceptions of the module before and after taking it with the aim of assessing the impact of the module on students' views on the ways in which the module may support the enhancement of employability skills.

Question types were comprised of a mixture of multiple choice, single choice, and Likert-style questions, and centred around Chinese language study background, students' views on having translation on the programme, anticipated/felt skills developed, and reasons for taking the module. The surveys were conducted using MS Forms and all students enrolled on the module in semester 2 of the 2020-21 academic year (20) were invited to participate in the voluntary study. A gentle reminder was sent a couple of days before the survey deadline in the hope of encouraging increased participation.

Whilst the focus on the specific module in question, and relatively small numbers of participants, makes this in essence a case study, the survey methodology adopted is considered suitable since it can provide very specific answers to the stated research questions, while also being adaptable to the specific needs other institutions might have investigating similar translation modules. The methodology was approved via the standard institutional ethical approval mechanism.

## 5 Results

A total of 9 students responded to the first survey, whilst 7 responded to the second one. As seen in Table 1, more respondents were female than male, with difference most marked in the second survey. Ab initio students predominated, and amongst first survey responders more than half had studied translation

before in some context, whilst in the second survey most had not. In the case of the first survey respondents, this can be interpreted as implying a high degree of intentionality amongst students taking the module, in that they already had experience of translation and deliberately opted to further develop their knowledge and skills by taking the module. Most of the participants were joint honours students, approximately half of whom in the case of each survey were studying Chinese with international development/business or management, perhaps indicating quite a strong instrumental approach to Chinese studies amongst the students enrolling on the module. In other words, even before commencing their Chinese degree programme, many of these students appear to have *already* had a highly instrumental approach to their studies, which could be connected with their reason for choosing the present module.

Table 1

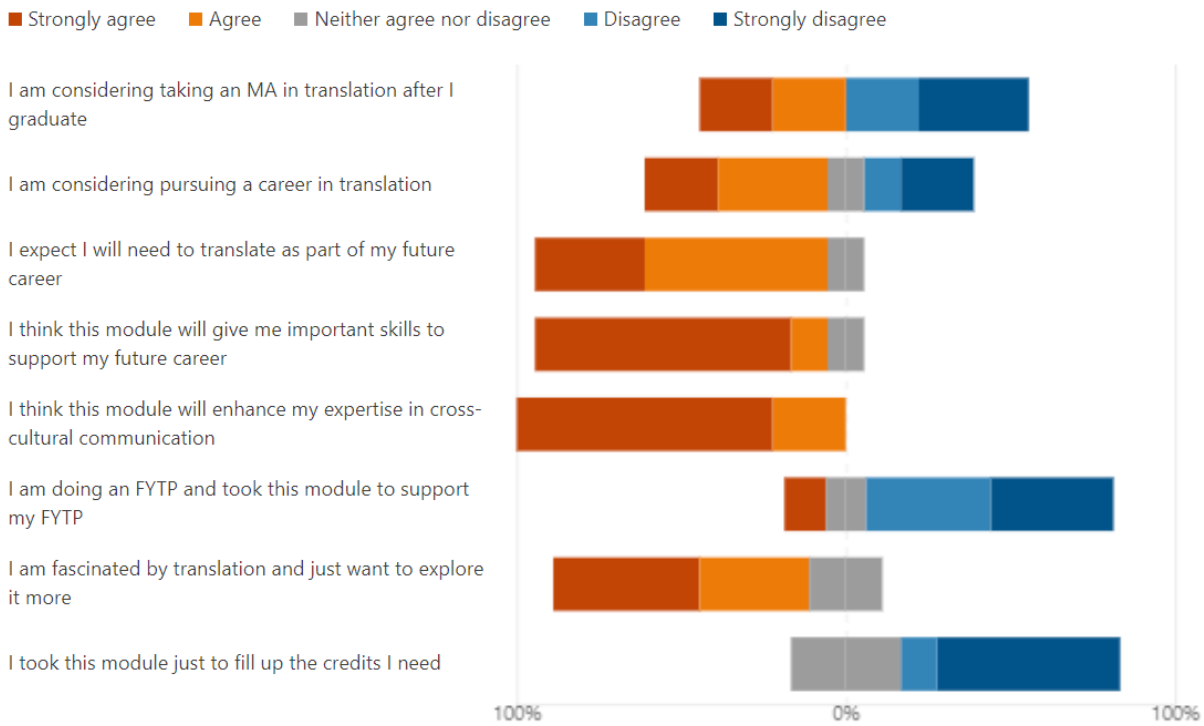
*Respondent Data for Both Surveys*

| Respondent information | Survey 1 | Survey 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Male/female respondents | 4/5 | 2/5 |
| Basic/intermediate Chinese in first year | 8/1 | 7/0 |
| Previously studied translation? Formally/independently/ both/ no | 1/4/0/4 | 1/1/0/5 |
| Degree programme: Single/joint honours | 2/7 | 1/6 |

### 5.1 Students' motivation for module selection

Figure 2

Survey 1: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?




As Fig. 2 shows, there was a very mixed response regarding whether students intended to pursue further studies in translation or pursue a career in translation, but most students expected to need to translate or work in cross-cultural communication in their future career and that the module would provide them with important skills to support their career. Students also appeared to have selected the module very intentionally and with an interest in exploring translation further.

It is perhaps surprising to note from the responses to the first two statements that whilst some were considering a career in translation, not all saw an MA in translation as the natural route to such a career. This could perhaps be simply due to a lack of awareness of the existence of translation MAs and the importance of gaining professional training in order to enter this career path. However, it is quite evident that students expected to have to translate in their future careers and that this module would provide them with skills to that end, suggesting that students had a reasonably accurate notion of what employers, as noted by Webb (2010), would expect from them. A significant proportion of students took the module for the purposes of exploring translation, but it appeared that in general students did not opt to take the module to support a specific Final Year Translation Project (FYTP). This may merely reflect the fact that the number of students taking the FYTP are in any case proportionately very low when compared with those taking a standard Final Year Project dissertation module) or merely to fill up credit.

When asked to explain their responses to the set of statements in Fig.2, one student said,

> 'I was thinking about doing an MA in translation and wanted to see if i'd [sic] be something that i'd like to do. Nice to try it out for a semester before committing to a whole MA',

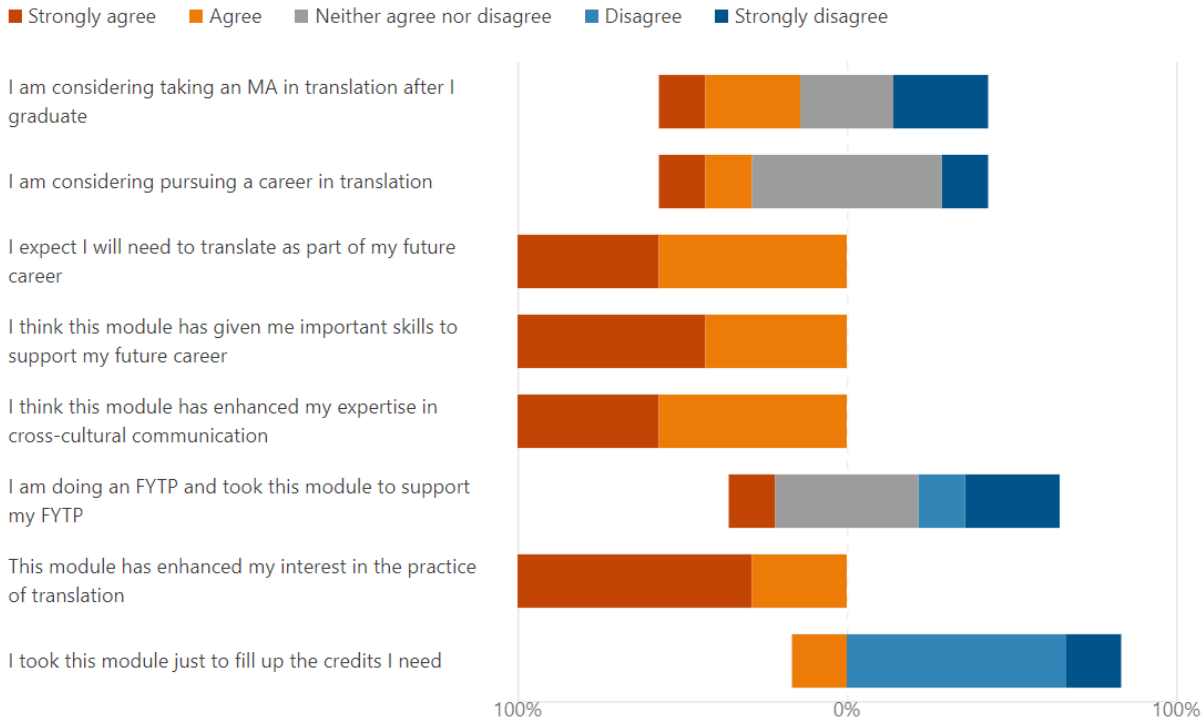
whilst another said,

> 'I'm taking this module because I am studying Chinese *and I think I will need to translate/ speak a different language in my future job by working for international businesses or by working abroad,* but I'm not interested in working directly as a translator so I don't think I need a module on "technical" translation. *I still expect the module to give me support for my future job.*' {italics mine, below also}

Such comments, in particular 'nice to try it out', and expecting the module 'to give me support for my future job', chime with the module description mentioned above, confirming the utility of the module in meeting the various motivations students may have had in selecting the module.

Figure 3

Survey 2: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?




In survey 2, conducted after students had finished taking the module, as seen in Fig.3, a very similar

set of statements to that in Fig. 2 was given to students to rate. As Fig.3 suggests, students perceive that the module has indeed given them important employability skills. Notable, also, is the perception that the module succeeded in enhancing the interest of students in the practice of translation. For this set of respondents, however, whilst some are considering a career in translation or taking a translation-related MA, those intent on a fulltime vocation in the field of translation are evidently few, underlining the importance of the module in supporting a wide-variety of career aspirations. When asked to explain their responses to the above set of statements, one student said,

> The module was really beneficial, especially in terms of *learning skills for translation that we don't get the opportunity to learn or apply in other modules* […] It was also a revelation to have the opportunity to translate different text types

whilst another said,

> *I chose the translation module to help apply it to my Level 3 Advanced Chinese Skills module, in the hopes it would help me become more aware of aspects of Chinese I probably would not have thought about when translating*. I think it has helped. I would also say the module has helped me become more aware of other languages too, I would be able to think about the content and techniques we have studied for this module and apply them to different languages.

From these statements can be seen the way the module also served to train students in skills which they had not gained elsewhere on the undergraduate Chinese degree programme and enabled them to look more critically at language and translation techniques.

## 5.2 Students' perceptions of the value of translation modules

Figure 4
Survey 1: Please describe your current views on a Chinese to English translation module

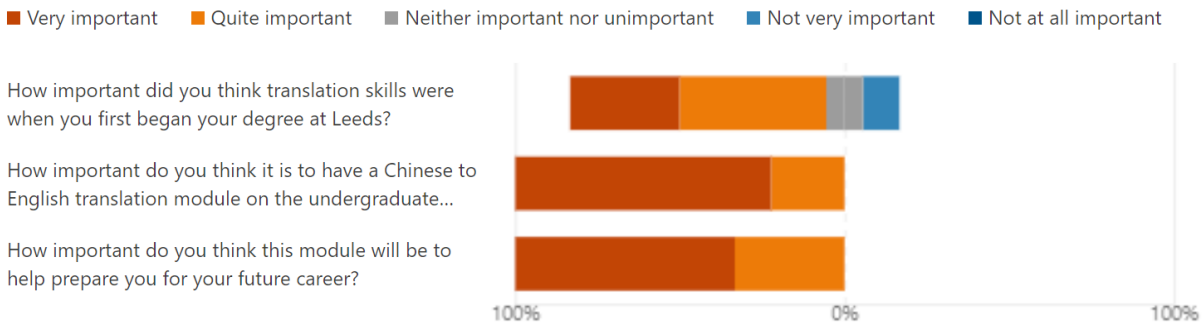



Fig. 4. demonstrates a general belief amongst respondents of the importance of having translation on the undergraduate curriculum. It should be noted, however, that this response is somewhat to be expected, given that all respondents opted to choose this specific optional module. Fig.4 also demonstrates that most respondents already believed translation skills to be important when they began their degree programmes, and the strong sense among students of the value of the module to support their preparation for working life.

> When asked to explain their responses to the above set of statements, one student said,
>
> Before my degree, I didn't think translation would be a big part. But now it's a good language learning tool and also important to understanding Chinese culture too.

whilst another said,

> I want to work in mainland China or Taiwan in the future so translation is very useful.

> I think translation skills are important, but I haven't done strict translation in the previous years of my degree. However, *I think this is quite an important part of the undergraduate Chinese curriculum. I think it will be important to prepare me for my future carreer because it's the first translation module I do, even if my carreer wont be that of translator but just for working in international businesses.*

Notable here are the first student's comments that they saw translation as a language learning tool, which chimes with the findings of Carreres (2006) and Tsagari and Phlōros (2013) in this regard, and the second student's comments that the module is also useful for someone pursuing a career in international business, highlighting once again the versatility and broad applicability of skills gained through the present module.

Figure 5

Survey 2: Please describe your current views on a Chinese to English translation module

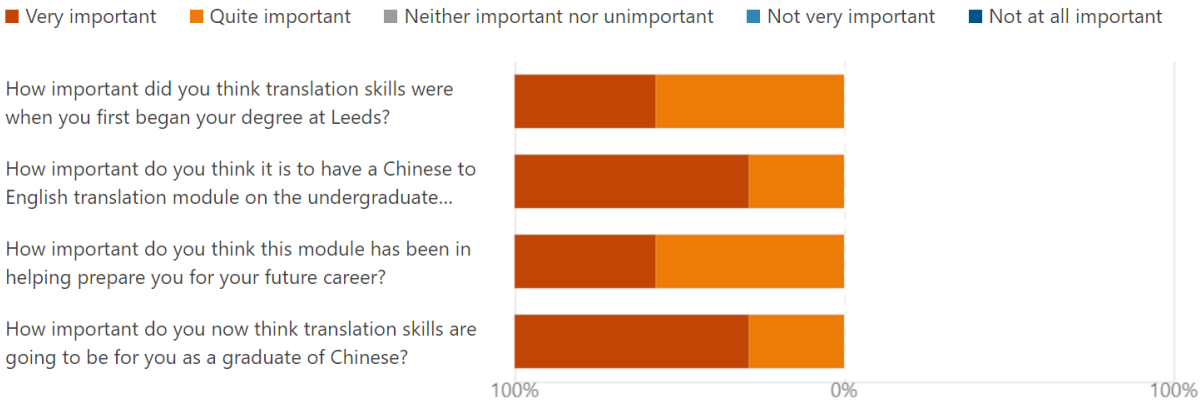



Fig.5 reveals student answers to a similar set of questions to those which were given in this regard in the first survey (Fig.4). This set of respondents indicate that their belief in the importance of having translation skills has grown during their undergraduate studies, and noticeably that they comprehensively believed in the importance of translation skills from the outset of their degree programmes, as well as a firm perception of the value of this module in helping them to prepare for their future careers.

> When asked to explain their responses to the above set of statements (survey 2), one student said,
>
> I think this module is a *really good module for employability skills* and I like that it's not pushed as that kind of module, it just presents an interesting programme of material and ways to learn the necessary skills *without being pushy about employability. I also think it's very important to have this module on the undergraduate curriculum for a few reasons: 1. for those of us who are hoping to leave straight into the graduate job market, it provides an extra set of language skills that the core language modules don't plus the additional general translation skills without having to do further study, and 2. for those of us going on to do further study in translation, it provides a taster of what that is like and builds a good foundation of skills on which to improve further at Masters level.*

Interestingly this student identified the employability value of the module, despite the fact that it was not 'pushed' onto students, although it is not clear whether this student identified the employability-supporting aspects of the module during the module or as a result of responding to the survey. The student's comments do, however, present evidence that the module is accomplishing its established goals regarding skills development and serving as a bridge from Chinese language study to students' careers.

### 5.3 Students' perceptions regarding skills development

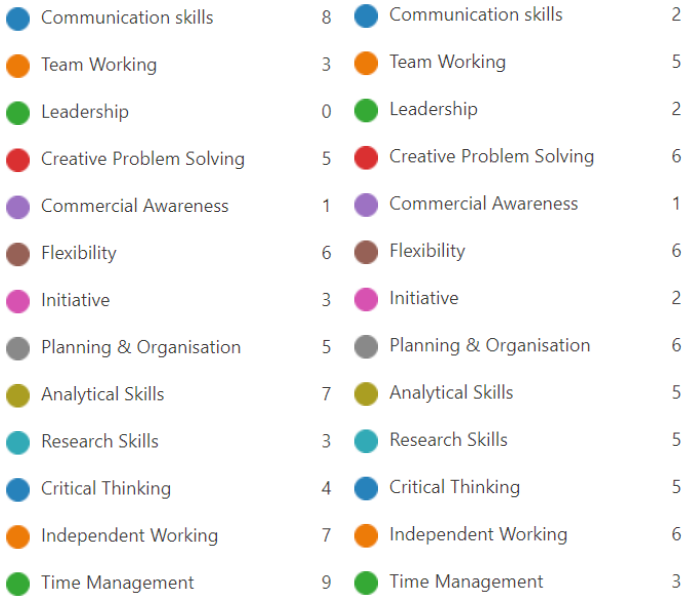
The next question in both surveys set out to examine students' perceptions regarding of which particular transferrable generic skills they felt the module is supportive. Dependent on institution, the exact names given for various transferrable generic skills varies, but at the present author's institution, the recognised skills are the 13 seen below in Fig. 6. Respondents of both surveys were asked to select any number of skills from the list of 13 which they felt would be (for survey 1) or had been (survey 2) strengthened by their participation in the module.

As seen in Fig.6., survey 1 reveals that students had a particular expectation that their time management, communication, independent working and analytical skills would be particularly enhanced. In survey 2, however, a very broad range of skills were particularly highlighted by students, namely creative problem solving, flexibility, planning and organisation, organisation, team working, analytical, research and critical thinking skills were commonly highlighted skills students' felt had been enhanced, this latter list supporting the interpretation that the module does indeed support the development of a broad range of skills.

Figure 6

*Skills you anticipate being/ feel have been strengthened, by your participation in this module*

(surveys 1 and 2 in order)

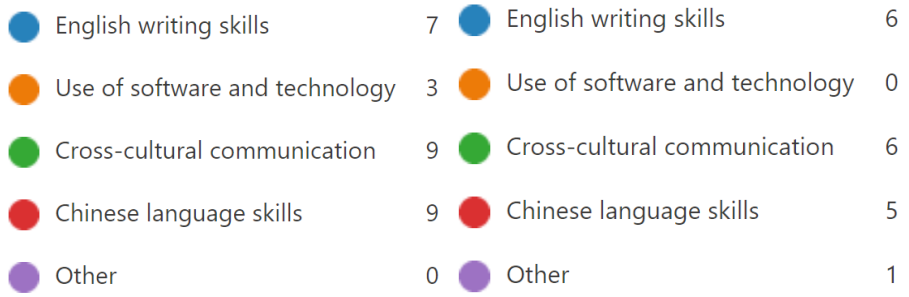



Aside from transferrable generic skills, students were also asked to assess some other skills which they may have felt the module would or had enhanced, and the results of this are shown in Fig.7.

These results show a slight increase in the perceived support of the module for the development of English writing skills (from 7/9 respondents to 6/7 respondents) and a slight drop in the perceptions of the module's support for Chinese language skills (from 9/9 respondents to 5/7 respondents). The former could perhaps be explained by the fact that it is often only through studying translation and coming to work on producing translations for an actual, theorised audience, that students begin to realise their English language production needs to be improved. The latter could potentially be explained by the fact that some students may have come to the module with the perception that the aim of the module was only connected to furthering their Chinese language skills, only later to realise that their English language production is more important than they first realised it to be.

Figure 7

*Other skills you think this module will help/has helped to strengthen (surveys 1 and 2 in order)*




In survey 2, students were also then asked to assess the change in their level of confidence towards applying their skills in Chinese to English translation in a real-world scenario compared with before they took the module. Table 2 evidences a comprehensive growth in students' confidence in translating Chinese texts into English, supporting the conclusion that, aside from generic skills, the module has clearly supported the development of subject-specific, vocation-supporting skills.

Table 2

*Survey 2: Now that the teaching on the module has finished, how confident do you now feel about your ability to translate texts from Chinese to English for a likely audience?*

| Response | No. of students |
|---|---|
| Much more confident than before | 4 |
| Slightly more confident than before | 3 |
| Neither more nor less confident than before | 0 |
| Slightly less confident than before | 0 |
| Much less confident than before | 0 |

Finally, respondents were asked in survey 2 to comment freely on their overall reflections on how the module had helped to make the connect between their Chinese language studies and their future career. The responses, show in Fig. 9 below, indicate perceptions of the module's usefulness as a steppingstone to professional translator training (MA), working cross-culturally or internationally, and also the broad applicability of skills gained.

### 5.4 Students' overall views on the employability value of the module

Table 3

*Survey 2: How has this module helped make the connect between your Chinese language studies and your future career?*

| |
|---|
| 'this module should span both semesters, especially to better prepare those of us wanting to take translation as an MA.' |
| *'This module has not only helped me develop a number of precious skills but it also allowed me to explore the option of a career in translation, which I had not considered before. I now have an active interest in translation and would like to develop through a Master degree.'* |
| 'It helped me apply my Chinese language studies to real-life situations, text genres were very varied so *I will be able to use the skills developed in a variety of contexts* independently of the carreer I embark on' |

'I think the module has helped me think about future careers, but I have not necessarily made any choices. I think the prospects of careers has become more clear, for example, teaching English as a foreign language, *I definitely think the translation module would help in the cross-cultural context of teaching English to people*. Also, the possibility of working in more international organisations is there. I think *the module definitely helps if you want a job in translation at big companies and organisations, or if you just want to work abroad in general. Translation skills would probably be a key role.'*

Notable in Table 3, aside from the evidence provided that the module has enabled some students to explore translation in connection with their future career, is one student's suggestion that the module should 'span both semesters', i.e. that a year-long module would be even more supportive of professionalisation and employability. Of note also is the crucial statement by one student that the module has provided skills to be used 'in a variety of contexts', thus providing support for the development of the transferrable generic skills supported by the module.

## 6 Discussion

The number of students responding to both surveys was not large, and therefore caution is needed when seeking to apply the results gained to represent the entirety of the student voice on perceptions of the present module. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the results should be disregarded, as they arguably provide at least a snapshot of the overall perceptions likely to be held by students taking the module. In particular, clear trends are visible in many of the responses to survey questions, implying the probability that views represented here are generally representative of the wider views of the class.

Overall results indicate student perceptions that this module is significantly supportive of their employability and the professionalisation of their language skills. The results provide important evidence that what the module sets out to accomplish is indeed being accomplished. In particular, it is important to note the broad range of skills which are convincingly held by students as being developed by their participation in this module, and indicates that, aside from the evident development of translation-specific skills, this module has the capacity to support the enhancement of students' overall employability and instrumental programme goals.

Results concur with Anisimova and McNeilly (2021) that these modules can have a significant positive impact on developing both generic and subject-specific skills. From comparing pre- and post-module surveys, an increased emphasis on students' perceptions of the module's support for the generic skills of planning & organisation, research, creative problem-solving and critical thinking skills was distinctly evident, suggesting that ways to further develop these specific skills can be intentionally further enhanced and signposted to students. Given the apparent weak intentionality in teaching translation on Chinese degree programmes in the UK in a semi-professional sense, noted by Starr and Hu (2019) above, it is apparent that, in light of the generic and specific skills which such modules can support, the focussed teaching of translation is arguably something which should be given greater attention by institutions teaching Chinese. The manifestation of this would ideally be seen in the prominent provision of translation-focussed modules, which should remain optional to allow for students' pursuit of different pathways to graduation in the final year of their undergraduate studies which all connect with their individually envisaged future and support their employability in a variety of ways and vocations.

Students surveyed for the present study demonstrated the clear belief of the need to translate in their future careers, whether that be as professional translators or within the context of another profession, which concurs with Webb's (2010) survey of employers' expectations of language graduates. However, since this survey only took in the perceptions of students actually enrolled on a translation module and does not capture the perceptions of the entire cohort, including students not taking a dedicated translation module, it is unclear whether this expectation of students of the need to translate in their future careers as

graduates of Chinese is shared by students not taking the module. Further research is needed to ascertain a broader range of students' perceptions to consult when further developing instrumental programme goals and targeted skills development across Chinese programmes.

Results of the study also indicate that the module clearly enhanced student interest in the practice of translation and did prove a stimulus for a minority to consider taking a translation MA, demonstrating the capacity to support those students who take the module with the aim of 'testing the waters' with regards to professional translator training and pursuing a career in translation. This function of the module is crucial, as without it some students who have the capacity to become excellent translators but who are uncertain whether they would be able to succeed in the field may lack confidence in taking the step to professional translator training. This module then acts as the bridge they need to build the confidence and take that step towards their future vocation. As is evident from the results above, student confidence in their translation skills was enhanced significantly across the board through taking this module, and as a result it can be argued that teaching translation in the manner prescribed in the present module is truly *instrumental*, both in the meaning of being crucial and of relating to students' future vocations, in supporting student futures.

Survey results indicate weak support of IT skills in the case of the present module. This is not too surprising, given that CAT tools are not introduced into the module, and students may only find themselves using standard software, such as MS Word, which they are accustomed to using for many other modules. Whether students employed the use of machine translation tools, such as Deep L or Bing and others, was not examined by the present survey, so it is unclear to what extent students used these tools for the present module and whether they used them more for this module than for other modules. However, given that the module seeks to prepare students for the task of translating in their future careers, in which they will almost certainly find themselves using machine translation at least at the level of the tools mentioned above, further attention needs to be given to incorporating the use of said tools into the module. Whilst there may be sound pedagogical reasons for discouraging the use of such tools in other modules within the Chinese language curriculum, particularly in the earlier years of the course, given the instrumental gains to be made by the present module, the use of machine translation, and by association post-editing, should not be taboo, although care will be needed to teach students when and how to appropriately use it. These concerns are shared broadly by foreign language instructors (Clifford et al. 2013; Niño, 2008; Jolley & Maimone, 2015), but it is crucial for translation pedagogy to keep apace with advances in technology, as noted by Marczak (2018), and shying away from this only denies students the chance to develop further vital skills they will need in their careers.

Whilst it is possible that slightly different survey results can be expected when the module is taught fully face-to-face and not online, overall comments from survey respondents from the present study still indicate the value of the module for student gains despite having been taught online, reflecting a continuity with the verbal comments the present author formerly received which provided much of the fuel and impetus for the present study. Therefore, the results and comments gain from students in this case study as mentioned above should still be considered valuable.

## 7 Conclusion and Future Studies

This study provides evidence in support of the presence of translation modules on undergraduate Chinese programmes, and in particular in the context of UK HE where the QAA Benchmark Statement (2019) for the discipline specifically states the importance of mediation skills. The present author would even go so far as to posit that the absence of a focused module on translation in undergraduate Chinese language degree programmes is hard to justify, given the central importance of instrumental programme goals and providing students with an education which should segue into careers utilising the skills which students have just spent several years and a large amount of money to acquire and develop.

Students responding to these two surveys displayed significant strength of belief in the value of this module for supporting the professionalisation of their language skills and employability. Inevitably, however, there are limitations to the present study, due to the fact that the only respondents to the survey were students who were about to take, or those just having taken, the present translation module. A future study could incorporate the views of complete cohorts on all years of study of the undergraduate Chinese programme - and indeed on other similar programmes within and beyond the UK - to ascertain the views of the broader student body of the presence of the translation module on the undergraduate degree programme, as noted above. In addition, the small number of respondents also creates certain limitations for the validity of the conclusions which can be drawn, and a greater number of respondents would certainly have been desirable. Nevertheless, the relative richness of qualitative responses received provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of the module, which in this instance was taught entirely online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another future study would involve reaching out to alumni who took the module before graduating to ascertain their views on how the module contributed to their current employment and whether/how the skills they gained are having an impact in their careers. Such a study could also incorporate the views of alumni who did not take the module, in order to examine the presence or otherwise of different programme outcomes for students taking and not taking the present module. The value of this would be to enable even further intentional development of the module to ensure greater students gains and greater support of the professionalisation of students' Chinese language skills and their employability. It is believed that the results and indications gained from the above case study offer useful insights in support of the broad development of undergraduate translation modules across the sector.

## Note

1. The FYTP consists of an extended translation project and a translation-related dissertation (not commentary) which utilises the extended translation as data for analysis in the dissertation aspect.

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# 学生对实用中英翻译课于专业化和就业能力影响的看法研究

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## 摘要

长期以来，翻译一直是本科语言学位的一部分，其作用在近年来被广泛讨论 (Cook, 2007, 2010; Hubert, 2017)。Webb (2010) 指出雇主对语言系毕业生的翻译技能有期望，但对于中文翻译课程在提高中文专业本科生语言技能专业化的作用，至今还没有什么研究。

在笔者任教的大学，本科四年级的实用中英翻译课程被明确定位为 " 为那些考虑从事翻译和语言服务的人提供训练及练习机会 " 的课程 (University of Leeds, 2017)。近年来，学生们的非正式评论表明，他们认为在就业准备上，这个课程对加强语言技能专业化非常有用。然而，没有数据表明学生是否真的认为这一目标已经实现，因此本研究调查学生在这方面的观点，目的是进一步提升教学方法，使学生获得更大的收获。

调查结果显示，该课程支持发展广泛的通用可转移技能，并全面提高学生对自身翻译技能的信心，该课程有效地成为了通往职业翻译领域的尝试机会和桥梁。该调查也指出发展学生 IT 技能的必要性，特别是在使用基础机器翻译工具方面。

本文支持 Starr 和 Hu (2019) 的主张，即有必要在中文本科学位课程中就翻译教学做出更大努力。进一步研究将有助于更清楚了解学生在学习该课程后的收获，并支持进一步发展该课程的方向。

## 关键词

本科翻译课程，就业能力，专业化，学生观点，可转移技能

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