

The Potential of Role-Playing as a Translator Training Tool: students' performance and reflections

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ABSTRACT

Limited correspondence between university training curricula and translation labour market demands has long been noted by researchers. Aiming to reduce this gap and equip students to better adapt to the varying market demands, the researcher carried out an experiment involving role-playing with a group of Hong Kong beginner students of translation, in which simulated translator-client relations were introduced. This paper reports on the subject groups' translation performance and reflections on the role-playing exercises. According to my findings, the creative renditions of names by student translators generally won the simulated clients' approval; however, only three of the six translation projects on the whole satisfied the clients' expectations. This pinpoints the importance of students' acquiring some experience of translator-client interaction before they serve real clients in the future. The paper suggests that role-playing can be a useful pedagogical tool in addressing this gap in translator training: it gives learners an opportunity to learn about what is at stake in the translation transaction, helping them construct their own knowledge based on prior knowledge and achieve autonomy to follow a path of lifelong learning.

KEYWORDS: role-playing simulation, translator-client relations, translator training.

1. Introduction

Limited correspondence between university training curricula and the translation labour market demands is a recurring problem in many countries, and several studies have been carried out in this area (Li 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006; Bowker 2004; Schellekens 2004; Englund Dimitrova 2005; Gouadec 2007). Translation practitioners in countries such as Canada (Bowker 2004) and the United Kingdom (Schellekens 2004) comment that university graduates are not adequately equipped for the profession and that university training is too theoretical and focuses too much on academic or literary perspectives. In a traditional didactic setting, translation is often treated as a "language teaching and language testing method" (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 46): the teacher is the only qualified target reader of students' translations, who decides on what a correct translation should be like according to certain expectancy and relation norms (Chesterman 1997), whereas students have few chances to negotiate. Practice of this kind arguably deprives learners of exposure to translation situations that are likely to occur in real-life situations. Translation is an economic activity that involves many players, such as project managers, editors and clients, and, in this professional practice of intercultural communication, translators are "responsible both for carrying out the commissioned task and for ensuring the result of the translation process" (Nord (2007:21), with reference to Vermeer 1989: 174). Thus, translators need to understand the expectations of the commissioner of a translation assignment and have the interpersonal skills to work with all players involved, so that they can ask the right questions, take responsibility for the choices they make, and be prepared to defend their choices and accept that other people may agree or disagree with them (Schwartz in Durban et al. 2003). In most classrooms, students do not have occasions to practise these skills and exercise their discretionary power based on the complexity of various translation commissions.

How to prepare students well enough for industry needs? Don Kiraly, who devised a series of translation projects for his students at Gernsheim University in Germany, considers learning a “personal, holistic, intrinsically motivating and socially effectuated construction process”, (2000: 23) and has organized his social constructivist translation workshops so that students may “learn to identify important factors, to work with peers and to solve real translation problems” (2000: 66). Students’ collaboration with other parties in the translation process and the authenticity of translation projects are the guiding factors of his workshops. While I appreciate Kiraly’s aim of helping students construct their own knowledge in a situated, interactive and empowering setting of learning, I am hesitant about the use of authentic practices, especially for learners at the early stage of the course/program. Another translation teacher, Costanza Peverati, conducted a profession-based workshop modeled on Kiraly’s (2000) social constructivist approach at the Catholic University of Brescia in Italy in 2007. However, it was Kiraly (2005) and Peverati (2007), instead of students, who had direct contact with the client when serving as coordinator for authentic translation projects, so students had little chance to be exposed to the elemental pre-translation stage of negotiating translation job specifications and details with the clients. Moreover, the final responsibility rests with the teachers as they are the ones who must ensure the quality of the overall product, when students’ work is not up to the clients’ standards. Thus, teachers have to ‘bridge the gap’ between the client’s expected translation standard and the quality of students’ work. In addition, especially in group projects that involve contributions from different individuals, students’ translation and revision styles are different, and their motivation and language abilities vary, making it rather time-consuming and difficult to produce a final product that is consistent.

On-the-job training to be made a compulsory component of the curriculum has been proposed by Mossop (in Durban et al. 2003), who states that a practicum is a place for students to learn how to deal with long texts, work to deadlines, interact with clients and handle poorly written source texts. Nevertheless, I argue that students at a relatively early stage of their studies are too ‘green’ to work for real clients. And in fact, there are not enough authentic situations available: even in Canada where Mossop works, it has not been easy to find employers willing to accept students for practicums. In Hong Kong, the feasibility of this suggestion is not high either. At the time of writing, only one local university, Hong Kong Baptist University, is able to provide one practicum year for translation students at the undergraduate level.

Bernardini (2004: 24) argues that replicating a potential professional situation in the classroom has to be used very sparingly at the undergraduate stage because it may “disregard developmental and environmental factors”, i.e. treating learners as professionals without giving them a chance to develop skills and competencies needed in the professional arena, and may not produce desired effects since the ultimate aim is not to memorize fossilized procedures. Mossop (in Durban et al. 2003) also disapproves of the practice of simulating the workplace in the classroom, since that is not the function of a classroom. He points out that the classroom should be used for reflection on the problems and methods of translation. It seems doubtful that simulation of workplace and reflection on translation problems and methods are necessarily conflicting. Is simulating or replicating an authentic experience necessarily an activity to force students to memorize fossilized procedures? Would it not be possible for role-playing simulation to aim to let students experience the complexity of translational situations and thus ponder the role, responsibility and qualities of a translator?

I am interested in using role-playing simulation as a scaffolding tool for students' future work on authentic projects. Gouadec points out that enhancing a translation course's professional relevance is crucial, and suggests providing students with "simulation of different kinds of work situations [and] emulation of professional practice by carrying out translation service provision tasks under exactly the same conditions as in a standard professional context" (2007: 351-352). Role-playing simulation originated from psychodrama, which stemmed from psychologist Moreno's work published in 1934. He believed role playing serves as a diagnostic method as well as a kind of therapy that helps improve the relations between members of a unit, be it a couple, a small group or a community; it is a way of expressing group norms and characterizes an individual's social behaviour. Education researchers Fannie and George Shaftel (1967/1982) introduced role playing into curricular design for children and teenagers. They simulated students' life situations, assigned them to different roles, told them to make decisions and take the consequences, and then analyze the social values behind their behaviour. Role-playing simulation has been used in the teaching of a variety of subjects, e.g. language teaching, history, social studies and religious studies, and is also often used to teach communication skills to show how people interact with others and to explore their own attitudes and emotions (Ments 1999: 10-12). Applicable situations include customer service and sales, negotiations, public meetings, team working or group interviews (ibid.).

In the 1998-99 academic year, four universities in Europe – one in Italy, one in Austria, and two in Belgium – participated in the Vicenza-CETRA project "for the exchange of linguistic and translation competence" (Schiavi 2003: 74), which provided students with the opportunity to participate in what might be seen as a role-playing situation. Teaching staff chose texts for students' translation and interaction, i.e. Italian students submitted their French translations to their French-Belgian or Austrian peers, and the French group emailed their Italian target texts to the Italian group. Students received the work from non-native peers and were instructed to analyze the translations, think about how to improve the texts, and more importantly, act as "clients" and check whether and how the translations fulfilled their expectations as native speakers. In 2000 a similar collaborative attempt was made by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain, and the American University in Washington D.C. Stecconi (2003) finds that the Spanish participants were both eager and able to provide constructive feedback to American students, which helped them "get out of the American box" (ibid). Playing different roles (of the translator and the client), gave students an opportunity to consider translation from different positions.

In order to explore the potential of role-playing as a translator training tool, while aiming to equip students to better adapt to the varying market demands, I carried out an experiment with a group of Hong Kong beginner students of translation, in which simulated translator-client relations were introduced. In this setting, the simulated clients, instead of the teacher, are the targeted reader of the students' translations. There are two research questions: (1) If student translators are asked to interact with the simulated clients during the translation process and to present the final products to the clients and respond to their feedback, how well could their translations adapt to different translational situations? and (2) What impact would the role-playing activity have on learners? To respond to the first question, this paper examines student translators' name renditions, which serve as an example of their overall translation performance, and reports on client groups' general satisfaction levels on the translation tasks. For the second question, I present student reflections on the pedagogical effects of role-playing simulation. The findings suggest that students, when role-playing as clients and translators, or even when acting as an audience to the translator-client interaction welcomed the opportunity to learn about what was at stake at the translation transaction.

2. Research Methodology: experiment

This section presents the methodology used in the research, describing the subjects (Section 2.1), the experiment design (Section 2.2) and data collection (Section 2.3).

2.1. Subjects

The students selected for the study were beginner students of translation: second year students from the Associate of Arts Program in Translation & Interpretation (AATI), a two-year sub-degree program organized by the Division of Language Studies of the Community College of City University of Hong Kong. Most entrants are aged between 18 and 20 and all have completed their A-level examinations; grade D in Chinese and English in one of their two public examinations is the threshold for them to enter the program. Almost none of them have any experience of professional translation.

The role-playing experiment was part of a thirteen-week compulsory translation course planned by the researcher for second-year students, entitled Translation Workshop I and delivered in the first semester of the academic year 2008-09. In their first year, students complete two interpretation courses and three translation courses, in addition to language and cultural courses; in the semester this research was carried out, they were taking two other translation courses, “Translating Creative Texts” and “Legal Translation”.

The 129 Year 2 students were allocated to five tutorial classes: three classes with 28 students each, one class with 27 students and one other with 18 students. In each tutorial class, students were divided into six groups. Every group had to play the role of two social agents: the authors/clients and the translators. In my exploratory experiment, a class of 28 students was my sample group.

2.2. Experiment Design

In Week 7 of the semester, each group of four to five people submitted a 400-word text written by themselves in Chinese, i.e. their L1, to introduce their (fictitious) companies’ products or services. In Week 8, the Chinese source texts were selected by one of the other groups (fictitious translation companies) for translation into English, their L2. All six groups were connected by a task-chain, set out in Table 1. For example, Group 6 is the client for Group 1 as the translator, Group 1 is the client for Group 2 as the translator, and so on. Thus, all of the groups played the roles of both translators *and* clients and none were both the client and the translator of another group.

Table 1: Task allocation

Position	Task Allocation					
The client-cum-author	Group 6	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
The translator	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Presentation Week	Week 12			Week 13		

From Weeks 8-12/13 translators translated the texts, and they were expected to communicate fully with their clients in order to understand the instructions, which could be decided by clients or negotiated between both parties. Clients could request translation firms for more than a translation, e.g. they could ask translation firms even to design the layout of the translation products, and translators could ask their clients relevant questions when they had any problems about the source text and the translation context. Students were free to plan how to work on the simulated translation job with teammates and each translation company had to keep a client-inquiry record. All the source texts were marketing material written by simulated

clients in order to promote goods or services. Some target texts were for leaflet printing, some for website posting.

The translation assignment was not easy for the students because they were working from Chinese-to-English (L1→L2) rather than English-to-Chinese (L2→L1). This direction was selected because I wanted to simulate a real-life experience: the demand for Chinese-to-English translation has risen in Hong Kong following its handover to Chinese sovereignty from Britain in 1997 (Li 2001). Advertising was chosen as a genre because all students had already received some training in translation and advertising in another translation course entitled “Translating Creative Texts”, and it was hoped that they would be able to bring what they had learned there to this new learning situation.

In Weeks 12 and 13, the translators presented their completed translations to the clients: three groups in the first week and three groups in the second. At least 24 hours before their presentation, the translators were required to give their ‘clients’ a hard or electronic copy of their work. After the translators’ presentation, the clients were encouraged to give comments and criticism, and the translators had the opportunity to respond to the feedback. Each presentation lasted 20-30 minutes, with an extra 5-10 minutes for client-translator interaction. Students who were neither the clients nor the translators observed the interactions so that they could learn from the variety of clients’ expectations and how different translator groups had attempted to establish appropriate translational relations between the source and target texts.

2.3. Data Collection

To gather qualitative data on the subjects’ translation performances, the researcher observed and took notes on their presentations and interactions with their clients during the Q&A sessions. The whole process was videotaped, serving as an extra-textual source. Textual sources such as translator groups’ client-inquiry records and presentation slides were also cross-checked to maximize the validity of conclusions. Students’ individual reflections, written in Chinese or English, were also collected for the purpose of exploring their perceived impact from the role-playing activity.

3. Findings

This section presents discussions of students’ translation performance (Section 3.1), clients’ satisfaction levels on the translations (Section 3.2) and student reflections on the role-playing exercises (Section 3.3). Although my role-playing simulation activity provides rich information to investigate how students handled different kinds and levels of translation problems, given the complexity of the many variables involved, in this paper I report only on students’ rendition of company and product names; this might involve translating, adapting or coining a new name. Names, and the associated branding, turned out to be one of the more important features of the translation task, reflected in the frequency to which they were referred in reports and comments from clients on their level of satisfaction on the overall translations (Section 3.2). Brand names are key to the success of translated advertising (see, for example, Liu 1999: 90, Xu 2003: 104, De Mooij 2004: 188-189, Munday 2004: 201), one of the classic examples being the unfortunate choice of calling a car “Nova” which means “it doesn’t go” in Spanish (Daye 2006). Some mainland Chinese brands also carry negative association after being translated literally into English (Liu 1999: 92-93); “Cuckoo Radios” (ST: 杜鵑牌收音機), for instance, reads like “Cuckold Radios” and the word “cuckoo” means “silly and crazy”, and “White Elephant Batteries” (ST: 大象牌電池) reminds English readers of a useless possession involving great expense. Better renditions for these are “Nightingale Radios” and simply “Elephant Batteries”.

3.1. Students' Performance regarding Company and Product Name Rendition

Four of the six groups (i.e. Groups 1, 2, 5 and 6) were required to render brand/company names for the clients. Table 2 below shows students' translation considerations and their name renditions.

Table 2: Student translation choices and considerations with particular reference to company and product names

Categories	Projects requiring name rendition			
	1. Translators: Group 1	2. Translators: Group 2	3. Translators: Group 5	4. Translators: Group 6
Source text	Two new product lines: “優雅紳士”&“銀河”	Company name: “汝恩”	Company name: “緣途有我”	Three new cafés: “紅舍”, “白棧” & “藍閣”
My literal back translation	“Elegant gentlemen” & “Galaxy”	“You/breasts” + “present”	“On the way you have me to keep you company” + “It was fate that you met me”	“Café Red”, “Café White”& “Café Blue”
Final rendition	“Her squire” & “His galaxy”	“Breasant”	“Circlus”	“Café Rosy”, “Café Lily”& “Café Chicory”
Students' translation strategy	TT-oriented – “ST status is relatively lower than that of the TT”; Reader-friendly; Flexible	Reader-oriented	ST-oriented; User-friendly	TT-oriented – “use of colloquial expressions & creative translation”
Clients' feedback	Great translations	Fine translation	Fine translation	Unacceptable translations
Clients' description	Men's jewellery	A women's lingerie manufacturer	A wedding planner	A café chain with three cafés
Clients' target customer	Men & women with high income	Women of all ages and income levels	Couples with high income	All people

Three of the four projects involving company name translation won the clients' approval: Projects 1, 2 and 3. With the use of “Her squire” and “His galaxy”, translator group 1 attempted to create a connection between the two product series to be promoted at the same time. They pointed out that the status of the ST should be relatively lower than that of the TT they produced, so they came up with a creative solution without consulting the clients before their presentation. The clients liked the newly created link between the two series and thought the translations were even better than their original Chinese versions.

In Project 2, the Chinese name is a pun. The word 汝 is an ancient Chinese word, meaning “you”, which sounds similar to another Chinese word 乳, found in the Chinese term 乳房, meaning “breasts”. Another word used in the company name 恩 refers to 恩物 or ‘present’. When translating the name, translator group 2 coined a new word “Breasant”, by combining “breasts” and “present”, to convey the two important messages of the TT: the underwear products of their clients serve as “the present for you [all women]” and “the present for breasts”. The clients appreciated the name translation.

In Project 3, the name is also a pun. The original Chinese phrase is 沿途有我, which means “On the way you have me to keep you company”. 緣 has the same sound as 沿 in Cantonese, which means “fate” or “destiny”, so the company name 緣途有我 literally means

‘It was fate that you met me’. When rendering the name, translator group 5 also coined a new word ‘Circlus’. The word referred to ‘Circle Us’, with multiple meanings: (a) circle as the image of a ring, (b) ‘circle us’ referring to the bride and the groom being together, and (c) ‘circle us’, referring to the wedding planner keeping their clients company throughout the whole wedding planning process. The clients appreciated the translation and liked the third meaning most.

Project 4 by translator group 6, however, received very serious criticism from the clients. The translators rendered the café names into flower names. At the presentation, the translators said the clients had told them to be creative when working on name translation, so they decided not to adopt literal translation. The clients, however, disliked such renditions, and thought they did not match the ‘潮’ 中見典雅 (trendy but elegant) image of their cafés. It seems there was some communication problem between both parties; the clients and translators had two different target groups in mind: the former thought of Westerners with English as their L1, while the latter thought of Hong Kong residents with Cantonese as their L1. The translators had adopted a creative approach to the translation of the café names believing that they enjoyed a high degree of flexibility, which, unfortunately for them, turned out not to be the case. As one client-group member put it,

You are not sure about our target customers. From our ST, people should know that our cafés are for locals [Hong Kongers]... We want to expand our customer base, too. But we want an English translation mainly because it would enhance the elegant image of our group... (My translation)

In fact, to serve the clients better, before translating the text, the translators had emailed the clients and asked about the target customer groups of the three cafés, and if there were special requirements for café name rendition. Within a week, the clients emailed back and pointed out that they welcomed all walks of life, but among the three cafés one was particularly targeted at young people and a youthful clientele, one at professional or white-collar worker, and one at intellectuals or highly-educated people, and that ‘a creative rendition’ was preferred.

Two points are worth noting from the case of Project 4. Firstly, the ST itself might have implied the intended readership of the translation and the target customer group. The phrase 紅白藍是我們的集體回憶 (‘red-white-blue is our collective memory’) is written for Hong Kong people. It refers back to the 1970s and 80s when Hong Kong people from lower socio-economic classes used big, thick nylon/canvas bags with red-white-blue strips to take back various goods to family members in poorer parts of mainland China, reminding local Cantonese speakers of their mainland families, but it may mean something very different to Westerners, such as the US flag, the French flag and revolution etc. Secondly, while the clients were looking for a ‘creative translation’, they are still likely to have had some idea as to what they wanted. The translators could have sent the flower names to the clients for their advice before submitting the entire TT. In fact, face-to-face communication or a phone call may work better than simply email contact in order for a translator to successfully understand and interpret translation job specifications.

All four groups translated very freely and creatively but for Project 1 this was highly successful while for Project 4 the same approach resulted in failure. This reflects part of the complex and varied nature of the translation market in the real world. Before serving real clients, students need to be aware of different expectations of commissioners, learn to ask and

listen to their needs, and negotiate with them when necessary. Role-playing seems to have provided that opportunity for students to learn these skills.

3.2. Clients' Satisfaction Level on the Translations

This study also attempts to look at simulated clients' satisfaction level with the overall translations, although no comprehensive evaluation system was adopted. After listening to translators' presentations, clients commented on the work and further expressed their level of satisfaction in their written reflections following the interaction with translators. Table 3 summarizes client groups' overall perceptions of the translations, with remarks taken from student reflections given at the time for the presentations.

Table 3: Client groups' overall perceptions of the translations

Translator group	1	2	3	4	5	6
With name rendition?	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
To what extent were the clients satisfied with the TT?	"To a large extent",	"Accepted",	No	No	"To a certain extent",	No
Reasons / Remarks	The TT could be better if more respect was placed on the ST and there was no large scale omission of adjectives.	No concrete comments were made.	TT was inaccurate & uncreative.	The clients thought they would lose clients if using the TT for promotion as it deviated from ST ideas.	Current TT used simple words so it did not look grand enough. This did not match the firm's high class image.	The clients and the translators had different target readerships in mind.

This was the first translation assignment in which students were asked to translate a text to serve a particular (simulated) client group for a specific context. Table 3 shows that half of the six translator groups, including the two groups with no need to work on name rendition (Groups 3 and 4), failed to provide translations that satisfied their clients' expectations. Their failures were attributed to various causes:

- (a) *Misunderstanding of job specifications*: Group 6 misunderstood the job specifications and rendered café names, one of the most important features of the ST and the commission, in a way that was not accepted by the clients.
- (b) *Lack of knowledge of the clients' business*: Group 4's courier clients challenged the translators' well-intentioned explicitations, and one example is given here:

ST: 派遞往全港各區上下午於.....

My literal back translation: Delivering goods to all areas in Hong Kong in the morning and afternoon...

Group 4's TT: Delivering goods to all areas in Hong Kong from 8am to 6am...

Clients' reprimand: Let me explain the reason why we have not specified the time... If I did, a client requesting for courier service at 7:45am would not choose our company. Or if the client called our company and found that we accepted the order, we will never reject the order, they would then regard us negatively as a money-driven company. That's why we just mentioned "morning", "afternoon"... I have already told your colleagues that I would like your translation to be adequate to the ST, as adequate as possible. But I believe you haven't realized the gentle reminder of your client, and you don't understand what your client wants and needs. (My translation)

The clients believed that their translators lacked knowledge of their industry and they would run the risks of losing customers if using the translation provided.

- (c) *Over-confidence*: Groups 3 and 4 had no problem understanding the instructions but seemed over-confident in that they thought they had firmly grasped the Chinese ST ideas and the clients' rationale behind those ideas. Group 4 explicitated ST ideas without discussing them with the clients or getting their prior approval, as they thought they understood the clients' needs well enough and believed the use of explicitation would benefit the clients more than the use of literal translation. Group 3, during presentation time, said that the translation task was easy and straightforward; however, they were too confident and misinterpreted some ST ideas. For example:

ST: 為您累積時間, 予您累積財富

My literal translation: Save time for you, and you gain wealth!

Group 3's TT: We serve the best for less.

Clients' disapproval: Our original idea is that we are a fast food restaurant. We want our customers to finish their meal in shorter time, then they have more time for work or for their plans, and they can have more wealth. Your slogan "We serve the best for less" seems to mean that our customers can enjoy a cheaper and quicker meal with good service. It seems that the translated slogan carries a different meaning. (My translation)

These are all serious problems and, to a certain extent, demonstrate communication difficulties between the translators and the clients.

3.3. Students' Reflections

Students' reflections on the simulated translator-client setting were overwhelmingly positive. In this section, their post-experiment comments are grouped into and discussed under four categories: (a) about translation, (b) about the simulated translation assignment, (c) on communication with the clients, and (d) on coordination and cooperation with teammates.

(a) About Translation

On their written reflections, 13 students out of the 28 stated that they had rethought some of their beliefs about translation, the translation process and the role of translators. These included the beliefs that the translator only needs to work on their own, has much time to ponder lexical choices and syntactic structures, is responsible only for changing a text from one language into another and can rely on a bilingual dictionary as their best consulting partner in a translation task, and that the teacher is the only reader and assessor of a

translation. After the role play, the students expressed some new thoughts (all students' names have been changed):

At first I thought translation was tedious and no interaction was involved in the task, but a translator in fact faces a lot of challenges... (My translation)

Good language ability is not the only requirement, but also your abilities to research, keep your time, cooperate with your group mates and analyze the function of texts in different situations...I never thought that editing, proof-reading...are the responsibilities of a translator. When preparing for the presentation, the big problem we faced was the translation of the product name. We had to consider a lot, such as the meaning, the function, the intended customers... (Originally written in English)

[A] translation job seems [...] commercial: [the translator has] to suit the taste of customers and potential customers to maximize the benefit of the boss. In addition to good language, a translator should have different translating styles varied [with] the education [level] of readers, the aim of the original text and the culture and the thinking of the target group. These factors must be considered before translating rather than purely achieving fluency, which I used to believe. (My translation)

[A] translator always needs to finish a job within a limited time which could be very short...Within the limited preparation time, a translator needs to do a lot of research. They also need to find parallel texts and try to use those words or terms which are frequently used in the translated genre... (My translation)

These comments suggest that, after the exercise, the students showed greater awareness about what is involved in commercial translation of this sort, including, the need to consider the nature of the TT, the need for research, editing and proofreading skills, effective time management and cooperation with other translators throughout the process.

(b) About the Simulated Translation Assignment

Students were generally positive about the task and seemed to immerse themselves in the simulated setting and perceive the translation task as a job offered by the client rather than a home assignment requested by the teacher, and themselves as practitioners rather than students. They agreed that the simulation activity was practical and they seemed to be able to make use of what they had learned in class.

Simulation is a unique characteristic of this project...throughout the preparation process, we had rather different work attitudes. In most cases, when we deal with a translation task assigned by the teacher, we would not be so much concerned about others' expectation, and would just have one-off discussion with our group mates. However, we treated this exercise as a job for the client; when we had problems, we consulted the client and decided on our next moves. (My translation)

This time we acted as practitioners with a translation firm and translated marketing material for a client. We faced many difficulties in the translation process. We considered the stance of our firm and applied what we had learned in class, then we figured out appropriate measures. (My translation)

[T]his project is really practical in that we can apply all the things we have learned in the lessons. Moreover, the project acts as an indicator to see how much we understand what we have learned.

Professionalism is the core idea. I [tried to] assess effectiveness of every translation strategy and make professional decisions... (My translation)

(c) On Communication with the Clients

A total of 16 students of the 28 reflected on their communication with the client.

Great tact is needed when you ask your clients questions. You cannot be too direct even if you spot problems in the ST. I always thought that people studying translation should be persistent with lexical choices and syntactic structures. After this presentation, however, I understand that sometimes translators can be too stubborn. (My translation)

After the presentation, we understand that a translator does far more than just translate a text. The clients' feedback is our greatest concern. No matter how much we think about our clients' interests, our effort is all in vain if they do not appreciate it. This is true in reality as well. Besides, clients pay for our translation for better promoting themselves, so it's the translator's responsibility to achieve the clients' expectations. (My translation)

Now we know when dealing with the client, we have to be patient and tactful... (My translation)

Clients may not appreciate your effort and translation style. (See the case of translator group 6's translating café names into flower names!) So we have to understand the clients and their requirements from their brief replies or both parties' limited contact (clients are all busy). Eloquence and high emotional intelligence] are also important. (My translation)

When you are challenged by your clients, you should not argue with them. Instead, you should try to put forward your reasons, rationale and accept others' critics.

From the role-play exercise, students learned the implications of the fact that translators work for the clients, namely, that they should ensure that, as translators, they understand and satisfy the clients' expectations instead of being too stubborn with the word choices or translation strategies they had adopted. When in disagreement with the clients, translators should act professionally by explaining their rationale and proposing solutions in a patient and tactful way, and accepting criticism willingly.

(d) On Coordination and Cooperation with Teammates

It seems that student groups had different interpretations of the notion of 'division of labour'. Some groups allocated various parts of the translation job to different members based on their strengths; i.e. some people translated the text, some produced the video clip, and some prepared the presentation slides. Some groups divided the ST into several portions for different members to translate, and some groups had every member translate the whole ST and then discuss the translated versions and collaborate on developing a 'perfect' one. In all of these situations, students seemed to be able to solve their problems through cooperation among group members.

[E]ffective communication was really necessary because it helped us to find out the strengths of each of us so that we could divide the project into different parts effectively and reduce meaningless arguments...The biggest problem we faced was time management because we really wanted to make our project as professional as we could in that limited time.

We divided the ST into several parts; everyone was responsible for translating a part and explaining their rationale. Within a day we completed the first draft, and within three other days we finished revising the TT. We tried our best to make the translation style of various parts consistent. Finally we prepared a PPT for presentation. (My translation)

For the presentation, a piece of group work, there were always arguments. Most were about the text. Each of us first explained why we had an idea, and then combined them to form a translation with which we were all satisfied...that would be better than voting for the best idea because it is more fair.

Through participation in the role-playing exercise, students figured out ways to work with others effectively and harmoniously. Thus, for example, students made use of the strengths of every individual, ran sensible discussions for problems, and respected peers' opinions and the work they had done.

4. Conclusions and Final Observations

My student subjects were only in their second year of studying translation and so, were not qualified enough to receive a real translation job from a real client. In this project, student groups were assigned to play the role of both the translator and the client, and were exposed to the interaction between the two roles when playing the role of the audience. Through this role-play, students were able to gain some experience of the complex and varied translation market needs in the real world.

As the source texts were written by student groups themselves, in their L1 (Chinese), they were in the best position to comment on others' English translations of their texts; they knew their own expectations and requirements, and thus were more critical and confident in their feedback. Students knew clearly that the teacher-cum-researcher would not be the only one to 'evaluate' their translations and presentations. Their clients, compared with the teacher, played a more crucial role in telling them how satisfactory a translation was. To defend their translations as products that could well serve their clients' demands, they had to patiently and clearly present their rationale behind every choice, and be able to justify their choices when questioned. This dynamic activity provided students with a chance to tackle authentic problems and suggest solutions by cooperating with teammates, leading them to a growing

awareness of the world around them (Piu 2006: 211), and to reconsider the nature of translation from multiple perspectives.

Students generally find that translating from L1 to L2 (Chinese-to-English) is far more difficult than translating from L2 to L1. In this exercise, allowing them to work in groups enhanced their confidence and helped, to a certain extent, improve the overall quality of their work; some students mentioned in their written reflections that they came up with different versions of how to translate a particular part, and they discussed and convinced each other of using their choices with reasons.

In this study, translators' creative renditions of names generally won the simulated clients' approval, and only three of the six translation projects on the whole satisfied the clients' expectations. This simulation exercise gave students an opportunity to learn about what was at stake in the translation transaction, providing them with experience of translator-client interaction before they serve real clients in the future.

Some translation researchers, including Kiraly (2000, 2005) and Peverati (2007), tend to believe that authentic projects bring more benefits to learners than do simulated projects. This paper suggests, however, that role-playing can serve as an appropriate pedagogical tool by highlighting the importance of cultivating students' "people skills" (Durban 2004), such as raising questions and proposing solutions to clients, which are elemental skills for translators, in addition to subject-matter knowledge and writing abilities. Being immersed in the simulation activity, students perceived themselves as practitioners. They were increasingly aware of the responsibility of translators, e.g. they should understand and satisfy the clients' expectations, work with different parties effectively and harmoniously, and act professionally when having disagreement with others. Use of simulation can facilitate students' learning, help them construct their own knowledge based on prior knowledge, make reasonable decisions and achieve autonomy to follow a path of lifelong learning.

Following this experiment, a number of recommendations for further study can be made. First, translator and client groups found the L1-to-L2 direction a little too challenging, so other researchers may consider selecting the L2-to-L1 direction when arranging role-playing activities for beginner students. Moreover, individuals working on their own or pair work may yield better data for hypothesis testing. Follow-up material might be made more rigorous through the use, for example, of pre- and post-experiment questionnaires in order to better ascertain the change of subjects' perceptions. Finally, more attention could be paid to the translators' rendition process; methodologies such as think-aloud protocols could be considered in future research.

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