

In Search of an Integrated Educational Model for MTI Program Based on SPORTS

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Abstract: MTI program, as a new training model for translation postgraduates, aims to cultivate high-level, practical and professional translators and interpreters. However, there exist some problems in current MTI education and a comprehensive educational model is urgently requested to provide more professionals for the globalization of China. Hence, the concept of “SPORTS” is constructed so as to provide some new perspectives to the research of MTI educational model, and foster more high-level “culture conveys” for the international community.

Keywords: MTI in China; SPORTS; an integrated educational model

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1. Introduction

Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) was established in 2007 in China in order to cultivate qualified interpreters and translators who can meet the needs of global economic integration and the enhancement of the country's international competitiveness, as well as the needs of the country's economic, cultural and social development. By 2019, 249 MTI programs had been set up to train talents who are able to translate and interpret between Chinese and other 11 languages, such as English, French, Japanese, Russian, German, Korean, Spanish, Arabic and Thai (Mu Lei 2020). The rapid development of MTI program, however, does not mean that it can really provide enough qualified translators and interpreters for the market. Currently, the Chinese translation market is still lack of high-quality translators and interpreters, especially those who are good at translating or interpreting Chinese into foreign languages. How to solve this issue is one of the concerns of many experts and scholars. Some previous studies on the MTI program have shed much light on its aims, training models, translation techniques, curriculum design, teaching materials, teaching methods, internship, etc., but few of them have constructed a comprehensive educational model for the program. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the existing problems of MTI program and then construct a feasible and comprehensive educational model for the program.

2. Problems of Current MTI Education

2.1 *Education principle*

In most cases, professors are the center of MTI education, who analyze successful translation or interpreting texts for students, instruct translation theory to them, and evaluate their translation or interpreting works; while MTI students acclimatize themselves to the instruction of teachers, taking notes and being passive receivers. This reflects the thoughts of traditional education--“Teacher-Centeredness”, which is developed by the German educationalist Johann Friederich Herbart in the 17th century. However, this kind of principle may trigger some severe problems. The most serious one is that it confers a lack of concern upon students’ subjectivity, interests, abilities, needs, and individual development. In addition, since teachers’ dominant role in education, students have less autonomy in their own learning, whose simple work is to memorize and accumulate theoretical knowledge passively from teachers. Lastly, each MTI student is evaluated by the same translation or interpreting task and standardized translation text, thus, producing an unfavorable outcome – students’ enthusiasm and interest about translation or interpreting would be flagging.

2.2 *Education approach*

The traditional lecture-based approach, established commonly in the world at large after 1950s, is primarily perceived as an efficient and direct way to transmit knowledge from teachers to students in class. When it is applied in MTI education, students receive theoretical knowledge from lectures and teachers who demonstrate “ideal” translation texts for the class, which puts a premium on knowledge and “ideal” translation texts. Some critiques have been raised, doubting about the effectiveness of lecture-based approach in MTI education, as it renders students with an enclosed learning environment and students are reduced to passive receivers. In this circumstance, most of the translation and interpreting exercises, textbooks, and other learning materials are not updated constantly, which makes MTI students have a limited view and understanding of the real translation market and leads to the deficiency of mutual communication and cooperation between teachers and students.

2.3 *Education curriculum*

At present, *The Design Scheme of MTI* issued by the Academic Committee of the State Council provides a syllabus (see Figure 1) for MTI program. It consists of three parts: compulsory courses, selective courses and internship. And the total credits amount to 30 points at least. This syllabus attaches importance to professional courses, such as consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and non-literary translation. Accordingly, some universities and colleges design practical courses mentioned above, but, such courses mainly focus on the translation or interpreting skills and ignore other professional skills and abilities, such as communication, cooperation, translation efficiency and quality control. Besides, the MTI programs in America, Britain, German, and Korea utilize computer technology to improve translation or interpreting efficiency and quality to a great extent, so do the MTI program in Taiwan and Hong Kong (Li Jimin 2019:109). Unfortunately, such contents are not in the curriculum of most MTI programs in mainland China.

Compulsory Courses	Politics		3 credits
	Chinese language and culture		3 credits
	Translation theory		2 credits
	Preliminary interpreting		2 credits
	Preliminary translation		2 credits
	MT	Literary translation	2 credits
		Non-literary translation	2 credits
	MI	Consecutive interpreting	4 credits
Simultaneous interpreting		4 credits	
Selective Courses	foreign language; translation history; translation appreciation and criticism; cross-cultural communication; contrastive study of Chinese and English; stylistics; international politics and economics; conference interpreting; applied interpreting; sight translation; commercial interpreting; court interpreting; diplomatic interpretation; business translation; legal translation; science and technology translation; media translation; computer-aided translation; English translation of Chinese classics		2 credits
Internship	2 credits		
Total	At least 30 credits		

Figure 1: *The Syllabus of The Design Scheme of MTI*

2.4 Education platform

Experts like Li Changshuan (2006), Miao Ju (2008), Chen Kefang (2009), Mu Lei and Wen Jun (2009) pointed out that the utilization of the Internet and computers brings profits to translation education. Although MTI teachers and students utilize multimedia equipment as frequently as they can in learning and teaching, the majority of them continue to treat computers and Internet as tools which could only download or upload materials, present files, play audio or video. Thus, the learning and teaching behavior still happens in the fixed time and location. On the other hand, some MTI teachers and students make use of technology excessively. Some teachers are overly reliant on Power Point, and reluctant to update their materials. The teaching contents they instruct are outdated. While, as for MTI students, when they launch self-learning activities online, especially those who lack self-discipline, are probably attracted by entertainment contents on the Internet. Such computer-assisted platform triggers problems like time restriction, geographical barrier, outdated information and teaching materials, deficient guidance and self-learning activity after class, less cooperation among students and so on.

2.5 Education management

Education management is not only an inseparable element of social management, but also a kind of educational phenomena. Teachers are indispensable in teaching management. In reality, most MTI teachers work on academic research, and part of them are College English teachers who have not received training on professional translation education (Mu Lei 2020: 94). Attributing to this factor, some of them believe MTI education is equal



to foreign language teaching, and have a stereotype about role of teachers, as “dispenser of knowledge”, “supervisor”, or “assessor”. However, a global investigation demonstrates that foreign language teachers have already raised their awareness of the roles of teachers (see Figure 2, data from Shu Dingfang 2006: 27). According to the chart, about 64.2% of foreign language teachers expect themselves to be “facilitator of learning”, and 53.5% of them would like to act as “source of advice”. By contrast, traditional roles as “source of expertise” (46.4%), and “managing roles” (35.7%), “evaluator” (10.7%) have been obviously moderated. Therefore, the roles that MTI teachers should play needs more emphases.

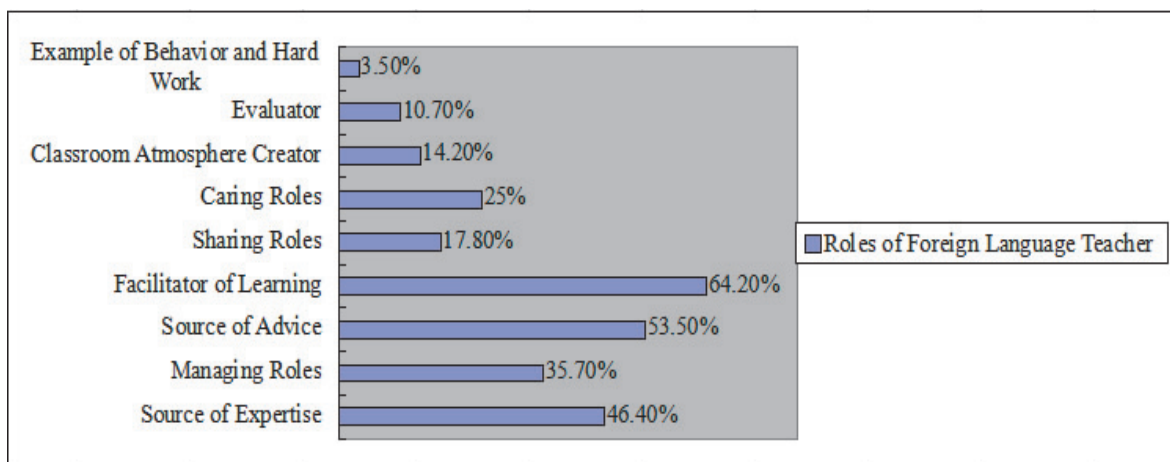


Figure 2: A Global Investigation on Teacher's Role

2.6 Education target

Education target refers to what kind of talents are trained through a series of teaching activities. In regard to the education target of MTI program, the Academic Committee of the State Council sets up a specific target – “producing high-level and practical specialists in translation and interpreting who can meet the needs of China’s political, economic, cultural and social development”. This means that MTI students probably work in translation industry after graduation. However, according to the investigation on the employment of MTI students from 2014 to 2018, in spite of the fact that the average employment rate is high, at about 95%, those who are employed by language service companies or organizations only account for 59.5% (Mu Lei 2020: 92). To some extent, it can be deduced that nearly 40% MTI graduates fail to reach the current MTI education target. Due to this, it is essential to reflect on the current education target set for MTI students.

3. Elaboration and Implementation of “SPORTS”

To solve the problems of current MTI education, a comprehensive educational model needs to be designed for the program. Based on the concept of “Children-Centeredness”, “Teacher-Centeredness”, “Project-Based Learning”, “Computer-Assisted and Web-Based Instruction”, “Constructivism”, “Harmonious Education” and “The Theory of Human All-round Development”, this paper brings up the concept of “SPORTS” and intends to construct a MTI educational model. Literally, “SPORTS” means that MTI students, like athletes, have to practice thousands of times to improve his/her skills. In addition, each letter in “SPORTS” has a specific meaning, which respectively stands for “Student-Centered Principle”, “Project-Based Approach”, “Orienta-

tion–Based Curriculum Design”, “Resources – Integrated Platform”, “Teacher – Guided Management”, and “Sustainability–Orientated Target”. These six aspects are interrelated and compatible (see Figure 3), and can be seen as an integrated educational model for the MTI program in China.

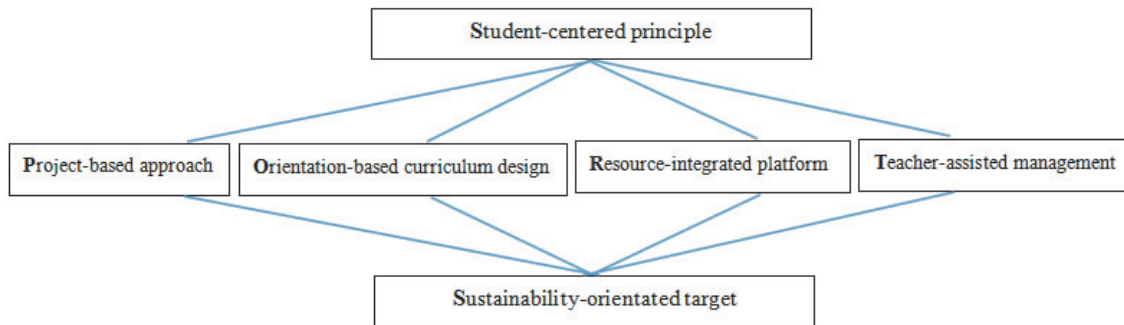


Figure 3: “SPORTS” Model

3.1 Fulfillment of student–centered principle in MTI education

In opposition to teacher–centered principle, student–centered principle places students at the top of the list. The thought of “student–centeredness” can be traced back to ancient Greece, such as “The Socratic Method”, Plato’s “Doctrine of Reminiscence”. This principle underlines the subjectivity of students. Students extricate themselves from “passive receivers” and turn into “active creators”. That is to say, it is students who construct knowledge through autonomous learning and cooperation with others. Besides, each student’s situation, including individual needs, educational background, learning methods and other information, will be given due consideration by teachers, as David Nunan argues, “the notion that different learners have different communicative requirements, and that these ought to be reflected, both in the content of the curriculum (what is taught) and learning processes (how it is taught)” (Nunan 2001: 10). It is a process that students learn gradually how to wield the given power and take charge of their learning eventually.

Under the guidance of student–centered principle, the role of MTI students is altered from four aspects. The initial step is to choose “what is going to learn”. Students, as independent learners, couple with teachers, settle teaching plan and select learning materials which are consistent with their real needs and interests together with them. Meanwhile, mutual support groups among students are founded to help MTI students, especially junior ones, to select the most suitable teaching contents. By virtue of the cooperation with teachers and students, MTI students gain more autonomy in the learning process and become the decider of their learning contents. In the second place, “how to instruct effectively” is another key point waiting to be converted. It is time for students to design and organize a wide range of learning activities by themselves according to their interests and learning methods, such as attending online courses regularly (e.g. Coursera, Udacity, and edX), discussing translation and interpreting tasks with classmates, joining in “subtitle groups” (people who add Chinese subtitles to update foreign language TV shows), watching videos about simultaneous or consecutive interpreting, organizing their research panel and so forth. In addition to the above two strategies, the time spent on learning and teaching is not confined to “school timetable”. The time available to study also includes students’ spare time, and with less or no supervision of teachers, MTI students still have consciousness to learn, read, explore, think, research, and practice. Making students supervise themselves and managing their own time allow them to realize the significance and necessity of studying individually and cooperatively. The last step is “how to assess students” in each

semester. MTI students are evaluated respectively based on their specialty. Different tasks, tests, questions, and projects are designed to examine the learning outcomes of students, and teachers assess their performance during translating or interpreting process, not mainly based on final works or scores. Besides, MTI students are encouraged to evaluate themselves and their classmates, so self-assessment and peer evaluation are also instrumental ways to help students to recognize their weaknesses and strengths.

3.2 Realization of project-based approach in MTI education

Unlike lecture-based approach, project-based approach is basically a way that propels students to acquire knowledge through completing more real-world projects individually and collaboratively. Prince and Felder have defined project-based learning as “learning where the context is initiated with an assignment to carry out one or more tasks that lead to the production of a final product” (Kunberger 2013: 255). Besides, some characteristics of this approach have been explained in Figure 4 (Danford 2006: 12):

Projects	Students
Authentic context, complex real-world problems	Have some choice of topic as well as the nature and the extent of content in the project
Cut across a number of disciplines	Try to shape their project to fit their own interests and abilities
Extend over a significant period of time	Use multiple sources of information
The final product is used or viewed by others	Plan for the effective use of their time (and resources)
Intermediate deadlines are scheduled, reflection and self-assessment is made	Create a product with significant and lasting value
	Work together on the project

Figure 4: Characteristics of Project-Based Approach

Basically, project-based approach in MTI education is well summed by three stages: preparation, proceeding of the project and feedback. The “Preparation” stage mainly consists of four steps (see Figure 5). The first and foremost is to make MTI students receive language training, master translation or interpreting theory, skills and tools through self-learning or lectures given by teachers. With sufficient training done, a timetable is so necessary because it makes sure students’ effective use of their time and guarantees the project can be finished on time. And then, according to the timetable, each student has a specific task based on their ability and demand. Lastly, since the project is divided into different parts, uniform formats, tools, and corpus should be settled.

With proper preparation done, each participant starts to translate or interpret the project (see Figure 6). During this process, regular group meetings are held to discuss the problems students meet in translating or interpreting, and to share useful translation strategy, skills and tools. When the first draft is finished, then students exchange their tasks and revise others’ work. After that, the final product should be handed in abiding by the timetable. Moreover, at this stage, staff from translation industry or real clients can also take part in the process, who assume the responsibility of supervising the entire progression of the projects, giving some advice to each student and assessing their performance and work.

The last stage (see Figure 7) is that teachers or real clients provide their feedback on the whole project and each students’ performance. According to the feedback, the text needs to be revised again by MTI students. MTI students, in turn, have to hand in their report about the project, reflecting on the translation or interpreting knowledge, skills, tools, strategy, principle they adopted in the process. As a result, the final stage is to display

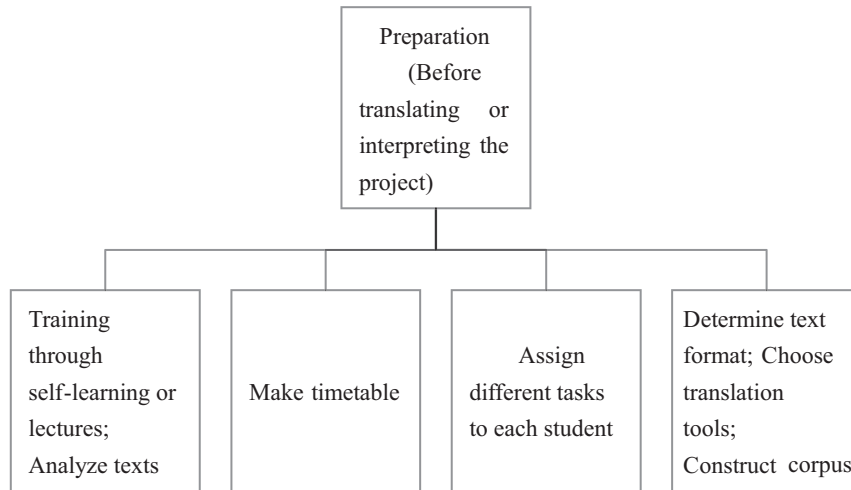


Figure 5: *The Preparation Stage of Project-Based Approach*

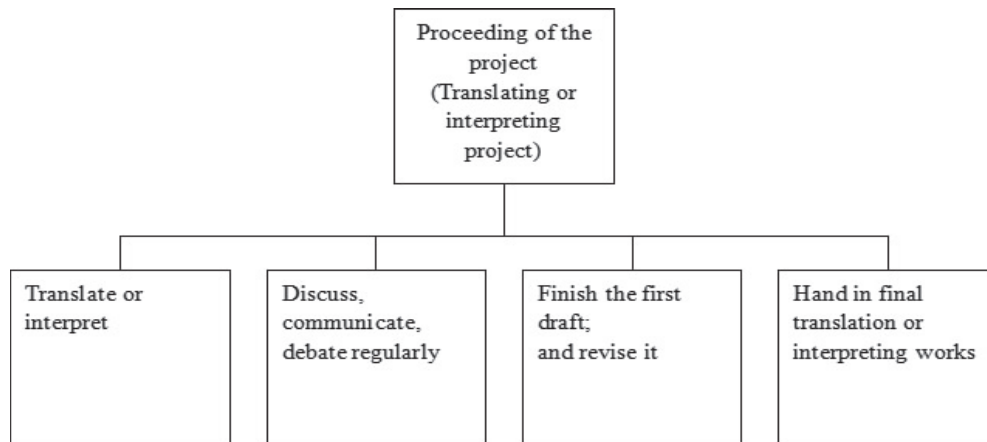


Figure 6: *The Proceeding of Project-Based Approach*

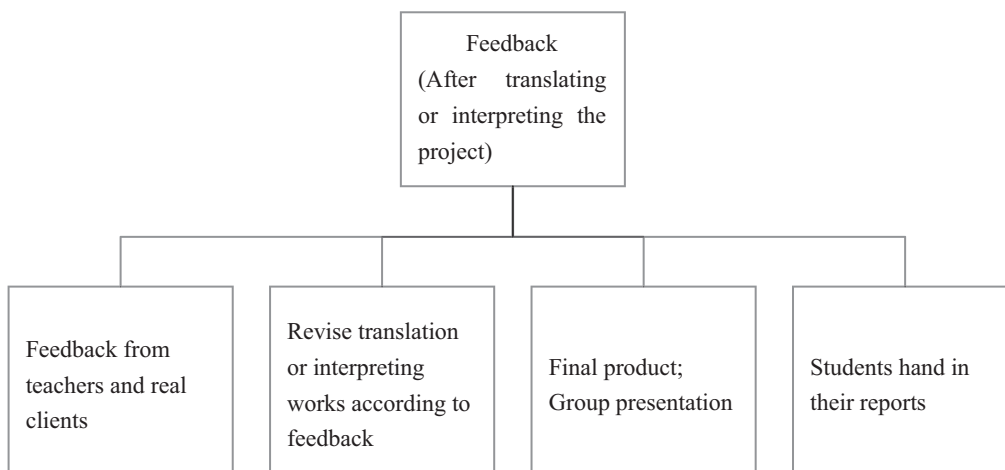


Figure 7: *The Feedback Stage of Project-Based Approach*

what MTI students have achieved through finishing the whole project, and review the knowledge that they have acquired from the project.

Project-based approach contains a myriad of realistic factors such as time pressure, accountability, and pro-

fessional self-assessment. During the process, MTI students act as translators or interpreters, editors, consultants, examiners, or even managers. Complex as it may be, it has been applied by several universities and colleges. For example, in Monterey Institute of International Studies, teachers often assign near-authentic works to students majoring in translation and interpretation. The School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Beijing Normal University undertook translation project provided by Tsinghua University Press, translating and publishing *Management Information Systems*.

3.3 Realization of orientation-based curriculum design in MTI education

Orientation-based curriculum is oriented towards universities or colleges' advantages, market demands, and students' needs so as to be designed as being characteristic, professional and technical. Before setting up MTI program, it is vital for each university or college to have a clear understanding of its orientation and advantages. At present, the colleges and universities who set up MTI program in China are chiefly divided into five types, universities of foreign languages, normal universities, colleges of science and engineering, comprehensive universities, and nationalities universities. The MTI programs in different types of universities or colleges are expected to be specialized in different disciplines and fields. To be a case in this point, the MTI program in universities of science and engineering can offer special MTI major like metallurgy translation, machinery translation, aviation translation, national defense translation, and other modern science and technology translation or interpreting; universities of foreign languages are able to provide multiple foreign languages MTI majors, such as Japanese-Chinese MTI, French-Chinese MTI, Spanish-Chinese MTI; normal universities can create major that instruct MTI students how to be MTI teachers in the future; and comprehensive universities had better integrate their best discipline with translation or interpreting. In this way, specific MTI programs and corresponding courses can be built with characteristics.

With the development of globalization, the modern language service industry requests "high-level and practical translators and interpreters" not only being adept at translating or interpreting, but also being familiar with translation engineering technology, desktop publishing, information technology and so on (WangHuashu 2014: 54). Accordingly, some technical courses, such as machine aided translation, software application, translation memory, machine translation, computer aided translation, and web resource retrieval should be added into current MTI curriculum. But teachers who can instruct these technical courses are few. One feasible way to solve this problem is to invite professionals from the industry, together with teachers, to participate in designing MTI curriculum, deciding teaching contents, discussing teaching plans, delivering lectures and introducing the translation tools they frequently use. For example, Beijing University outsourced "technical writing" to International Business Machines (IBM) and Kudos (Cai Hui and Zhang Chengzhi 2013:53).

Students' background information should be taken into consideration when designing curriculum as they are the potential translators or interpreters that MTI programs cultivate for the market. Students' educational backgrounds, interests, abilities, and especially career goals have a direct impact on the curriculum design. Furthermore, universities or colleges can also encourage MTI students to minor in other disciplines. This strategy not only utilizes teaching resources to a greater extent, but also eases the burden of foreign language department to set up interdisciplinary courses. For instance, one trait of the curriculum of Institute for Applied Linguistics in Kent State University is that students have to choose another subject as their minor, such as accounting, marketing, economics, biology, botany, architecture, and meteorology. These two ways make the MTI curriculum more job-related, and increase the employ-ability of MTI students.

3.4 Operation of resource-integrated platform in MTI education

Converting the so-called “computer-aided platform” into a resource-integrated platform involves three main steps. The prerequisite of a resources-integrated platform is the indispensable equipment, including hardware, such as computers, monitors, bandwidth, and other multimedia devices, guaranteeing that students and teachers can make use of computers and the Internet at all time. Meanwhile, software is also necessity, including professional translation software, corpora, tools, electronic library and so on. For instance, Department of Modern Languages in University of Bradford has access to “EURODICAUTOM” which is a relatively large terminology database in Europe. And Center for Translation and Intercultural Studies in University of Science and Technology in Manchester has the most abundant Transnational English Corpus around the world. With such database and corpus, MTI students can possess more useful resources and information when they doing translation or interpreting projects.

In the second place, online learning and teaching activities are under supervision, which ensures that the hardware and software are used in proper ways. Because of the resource-integrated platform, more students’ self-learning and teachers’ guidance occur after class. Proper supervision of these activities is requested so as to enable teachers judge the value of their online learning. Furthermore, although MTI teachers are less susceptible to negative influences than students, their online activity also needs to be supervised. MTI teachers can supervise each other whether they have updated their teaching contents, blog, and online dialogue with students regularly or not. By doing so, can the excessive and deficient use of information technology be ameliorated and the resource-integrated platform serve better for MTI education.

Lastly, the quantity of resources MTI students gain and teachers release on the resource-integrated platform should be transformed into credits. Gail Hawisher (1992) has stated that learning and teaching online will exert pressure both on teachers and students. It is stressful for students and teachers to post their translation works online. Such pressure is named “communication anxiety”. Credits may be a feasible way to give students and teachers encouragement and ease their anxiety. For example, the times they log in BBS, the solutions, suggestions and comments they provide for other learners, the translation or interpreting materials and tools they share with others online, the translation texts or interpreting tape they post online, and any other useful resources and information they advertise online. No matter how useful and meaningful they might be, most of this performance can be transformed into certain credits. In this way, the contribution made by students and teachers to the resource-integrated will be rewarded, which propels them to make the most of this virtual platform and gives them more confidence.

3.5 Strategies for teacher-assisted management in MTI education

Being a qualified “assistant” in MTI education is a higher requirement for MTI teachers. They have to improve themselves and their translation teaching in various aspects. First of all, under the guidance of student-centered principle, MTI teachers help students to decide “what to learn”, “how to learn”, “when to learn” and “how to be assessed”. Superficially, it seems that student-centered principle contradicts with teacher-assisted management, but actually, teachers are always involved in students’ learning process. It is teachers who give students direction to find appropriate learning materials and sometimes even help them to discover the underlying value of textbooks and other learning materials, who give students advice when they learn by means of discussion, cooperation and other translating or interpreting learning activities, who make sure students are organized to

learn in and after class, and who design more flexible and various translation or interpreting assignments for students to assess themselves. The role of teacher is therefore enhanced in a learner-centered system, and skills demanded of the teacher are also greater (Nunan 2013: 53). Thus, MTI teachers are not “authority”, but the one who elicits students’ autonomous learning.

In the second place, universities or colleges and Ministry of Education should also attach great importance to the improvement of teacher quality. He Gangqiang (2016: 2) has said that the most serious barrier that the training of translation and interpreting talents should overcome is teacher quality. Not only should their quality to translation or interpreting competence be improved, but also their knowledge about translation teaching, methodology, interdiscipline, and etc. Regular academic symposiums, seminars, internship at translation companies, and other forms of training are necessary to be held, to augment teachers’ translation or interpreting practice, to inform them of the latest methodology, to enrich their knowledge of other disciplines, especially computer science, and to have a good grasp of MTI programs. For instance, Translators Association of China, China National Committee for MTI education, and Beijing Foreign Studies University devote to the cultivation of MTI teachers by inaugurating training workshop for translation teachers annually.

Lastly, MTI teachers stations in each university or college to facilitate communication and reinforce collaboration should be constructed among MTI teachers, experts, researches, and other employees in the translation industry. Chai Mingjiong has put forward that the team of translation or interpreting teachers should combine Chinese teachers with foreign teachers, scholars with professional translators or interpreters, combine full-time teachers with part-time teachers, and combine teachers in universities or colleges and staff from the translation industry (Chai 2010: 56). In such a station, teachers from different countries and experts from different fields are able to share their experience or opinion about translation or interpreting, learn from others’ translation or interpreting teaching, and solve problems they meet in MTI education together. Beijing Foreign Studies University, to be a case in this point, have invited teachers from other MTI programs to attend their MTI courses, lectures and seminars for a week. During this visiting, MTI teachers have come together to communicate and work with each other.

3.6 Achievement of sustainability-oriented target in MTI education

Sukhomlinski, a notable Soviet educationalist, suggests a superior education target – education is to cultivate civilized citizens and happy individuals who have well-rounded development, and are full of creativity and energy (Wang Yigao 2001). Based on Sukhomlinski’s “harmonious education” and “all-rounded development”, “sustainability-orientated target” is constructed, which gives equal consideration to the sustainability of students and the cultural industry. Students’ sustainability means that the development of MTI students is continuous and progressive, even after graduation. The first thing that MTI students should do is to make a specific long-term training plan and career plan. These plans are supposed to emphasize students’ well-rounded development, including moral, intelligence, physics, psychology and work, in addition to the mastery of translation and interpreting knowledge and skills. The MTI program in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies can be taken as a confirming example. In the first semester of master’s study, MTI students have to draft their own training plans with their mentors according to their individual condition and research orientation. And in the following two years, courses MTI students choose, thesis proposals they write, internship they participate in are arranged abiding by the training plan they made first. And for MTI education outside of the school, schools can even organize some short-term training activities regularly and invite those postgraduates to attend, or MTI students can be re-



quested to report their experience of internship and reflect on work they have done in the workplace.

Regarding the sustainability cultural industry, translating or interpreting is not merely transforming source language into target language, but a means of intercultural communication. In this way, the education target does not limit MTI students to translators and interpreters. Instead, it aims at fostering “culture envoy” who undertakes the responsibility of facilitating further cultural exchange around the world. With the awareness of “cultural exchange”, MTI students have to learn more foreign cultures, to acquire more knowledge in other fields, and to keep pace with modern development. Furthermore, when MTI students’ personal development is evolving, they are required to achieve social sustainability, especially the sustainable development of the Chinese cultural industry. In addition to translators or interpreters, there are many other works that disseminate various cultures, such as foreign language teachers, officials of foreign affairs office, or even Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Social sustainability, in turn, brings profits to individual sustainability. With the boom of cultural industry in China, more financial resources, equipment, opportunities and intercultural activities will be offered to MTI programs and MTI students, which is a win-win situation for both individuals and society.

4. Conclusion

Based on previous studies and researches, this paper puts forward the concept of “SPORTS”, which sets considerable store by “practice” for MTI education. Each letter of “SPORTS” is interrelated and interdependent, but not isolated and contradictory. The first letter “S”, “student-centered principle”, is the guideline and the rest letters reflect the core of “S” – the subjectivity of MTI students. By project-based approach, MTI students commit themselves to translation or interpreting projects, who are the subject of the whole project and acquire knowledge from independent and cooperative learning. Designing orientation-based curriculum, MTI teachers take demands of the modern language service industry, take advantages of universities or colleges, and take students’ individual condition into account. Thus, MTI students acquire knowledge and skills which are conducive to their future development and meet their demands. The resource-integrated platform is a virtual classroom which provides MTI students a learning environment without any time restriction and geographical barrier. And they can retrieve much information and learning materials from computers and the Internet so as to achieve autonomous learning and cooperation with different partners. No matter how much subjectivity MTI students have in MTI education, MTI teachers as assistants are always the backing for students’ learning. Due to teachers’ guidance and assistance, MTI students can perform better in independent and collaborative learning. Lastly, the teaching principle, approach, curriculum design, platform, and management are all to realize the last letter, “sustainability-orientated target”. MTI students are trained as “culture conveys”, including translators, interpreters, teachers, civil servants and other occupation which aims at the communication of different cultures. Thus, “SPORTS” not only fosters better MTI students, but also creates a thriving cultural industry in China.

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