

Original Paper

Chinese MTI Students' Multiple Identities Construction: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This article aims at unraveling Chinese MTI (Master of Translation and Interpreting) students' multiple identities. The cultural shift of translation studies gives impetus to carry out research on identity and translation. However, the identity research of translators remains a nascent field, with insufficient attention given to the aspects of dynamicity and multiplicity. Regarding MTI students as translators, L2 users, and graduate students, this article delves into the interrelationship of their multiple identities. These three identities are gradually constructed and might interact with each other during MTI students' graduate learning and translation practice, further affecting their self-cognition, professional emotions, and behaviors in translation practice. Finally, the article investigates the factors contributing to the construction of MTI students' multiple identities. Considering the emergence of the field of MTI, it is necessary to systematically evaluate the external and internal factors that affect the development of MTI students' multi-identities, so as to better adjust the construction of MTI major.

Keywords

Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI), identity, translators' identity

1. Introduction

The concept of identity is related to “who a person or a group of people are, what group they belong to and why, and what kind of relationship with the people around them” (Joseph, 2010). It can be perceived objectively or subjectively and encompasses both self-positioning and the positioning imposed by others (Block, 2007, p. 26). This concept applies to all entities, whether individuals, groups, or institutions. A general sense of identity denotes a person's origin, status, and qualifications, and refers to their position within a particular social relationship (Marx & Engels, 1997, p. 18). In conclusion, Identity is a dynamic, negotiable concept with multi-level, multi-dimensional features (Eckert, 2000; Norton, 2000; Block, 2007; Gao, 2008).

The cultural turn of translation studies has spurred research on identity and translation. However, current research on translator identity primarily focuses on the translation process without investigating translators' psychological conditions (Zeng, 2018). As both learners and practitioners of translation, MTI students possess multiple identities, including translator identity with language conversion ability, L2 user identity with proficiency in several languages, and graduate student identity. MTI students undergo a transition from graduate students to translators, and in this process, their translator identity shaped during postgraduate study influences their self-cognition, professional emotions, and behaviors in graduate study and translation practice. Furthermore, MTI has become an integral part of the translation industry, and studying the characteristics and changes of MTI students' self-identity can bridge the gap in the identity research of translators. Thus, the present study aims to uncover the characteristics of MTI students' multiple identities in the construction process of translator identity, rather than examining the translator identity from the outside perspective.

Despite the rapid construction of MTI, there are still deficiencies in its current curricula that relates to inadequate training aims. Academic instruction continues to dominate MTI education and teaching and traditional teaching methods of translation have not been updated since the establishment of MTI. These drawbacks may negatively affect MTI students' translator identity. Therefore, the present study attempts to identify the variables impacting the construction of MTI students' multiple identities.

Furthermore, the construction and transformation of MTI students' translator identity are not as stable and smooth as predicted. As a professional degree, MTI is designed to train highly skilled translators with strong professional abilities to excel in practical translation work. However, survey results indicate that most MTI students did not pursue careers directly related to translation after graduation, suggesting that the construction and transformation of MTI students' translator identity are fraught with challenges. Individual identities are formed through social practices and interactions with others. This raised the question of whether MTI students' translator identity may be influenced by their other identities. The present study aims to explore the interactions between MTI students' multiple identities to clarify whether the translator identity of MTI students is affected by their L2 user and graduate student identities.

2. Research Background

2.1 MTI Education in China

China's MTI education has expanded significantly in recent years. This specialized postgraduate program aims to cultivate highly competent translators and interpreters with strong language proficiency. An extensive spectrum of translation and interpreting abilities, including simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, translation theory, and practical translation, are covered in the program. In addition to language proficiency, MTI education in China places emphasis on academic research and professional ethics. Chinese colleges offer MTI programs with diverse foci, such as legal, medical, and business translation. Graduates of the program are well-equipped to work in various fields, such as

diplomacy, international business, and academia.

Although MTI education has made some progress since its establishment in 2006, it is currently facing several serious challenges. These include a lack of clarity in talent training concepts, inadequate training programs, insufficient teaching staff, resistance to changing traditional teaching methods and the concept of running a school due to the establishment of a new degree point. Other challenges include the absence or under utilization of practice teaching bases, outdated teaching management methods, low vocational qualification certification, and low quality of cultivated talents (Zhong, 2014; Zhong, 2017).

2.2 Identity in Translation Studies

Translation studies have undergone a developmental process, evolving from a subordinate and derivative discipline to an independent discipline. Initially, translation studies were subservient to literary studies and focused on word interpretation, before becoming a part of linguistics and emphasizing sentence transformation. In 1972, Holmes redefined “translation” as translation studies in *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies*, establishing the discipline’s identity as an independent field of study.

During the early stages of translation studies, linguists did not recognize its identity as a distinct field. However, because translation involves cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication (Snell-Hornby, 1991, 1994), it inevitably intersects with other disciplines such as linguistics, literature, and sociology, highlighting its interdisciplinary nature. This unique identity is reflected in the cross-infiltration between translation studies and other fields.

2.3 MTI Students’ Identities

The translator’s identity includes self-identification and the identification of others. Self-positioning comprises the translator’s perspective on their relationship with the original author, their role in the translation process, and their understanding of the translation profession. These aspects reflect the translator’s ideological belief or psychological condition of self-identity, which in turn impacts their behavior during the translation process (Zeng, 2018).

2.3.1 Translator’s Subjectivity

In the 1970s, there was a cultural shift in the western translation theory community, Susan Bassnett’s *Translation, History, and Culture* marked a cultural shift in the western translation theory community, prompting a move from linguistic to cultural analysis. This shift revealed that the translation is a process full of creation, and brought attention to the subject status of the translator. Zha and Tian (2003, p. 22) define the “translation subject” as the “translator”, who represents the most subjective and active factor when understanding texts and selecting translation strategies.

The translator’s subjectivity involves their artistic personality consciousness and initiative throughout the translation process, with their creativity manifesting as the core of their subjectivity. Zhong (2006) similarly views the translator’s subjectivity as their individual initiative in the translation process, while respecting external translation settings and understanding the cultural requirements of the target

language.

2.3.2 Translator Identity

The translator's subjectivity is constructed through their recognition of their identity. However, current research on translator identity is mostly focused on external perspectives rather than the translator's internal psychological conditions. Traditional Western translation theory often regarded translators as inferior with metaphors such as "slave" or "rebel", reflecting their subordinate status. Goethe (1819) argues that a translator's role is to copy the original work and transform foreign culture into local culture while the manipulation school maintains that translators and translation works are manipulated by poetics, patronage, ideology, and readers' response. This reinforces the notion that translators must adhere to the original and the original author. Hence, we can conclude from the external orientation towards translators' recognition that group identity has a more or less significant impact on a translator's traditional self-positioning.

Deconstructive translation theory has broken down the binary opposition between the original author and the translator, emphasizing the translator's subjectivity (Zhang, 2008, p. 64). The translator has moved from a backstage figure to the front stage, playing new roles as the original controller, rewriter, re-creator, coordinator, and cultural communicator.

Campos's proposal of "Transcreation" recognizes the creative role of the translator in poetry translation, positively impacting the self-identity of translators and interpreters. However, this improvement in translators' self-identity is limited to the process of translation or interpretation, and the identity imposed on translators by outsiders may not align with the translator community. The market value of translators is often underestimated, and their professional identity needs to be strengthened (Zeng, 2018).

3. Methods

3.1 Procedures

Ten MTI students from a national key university in south China participated in the present study, including 4 males and 6 females. With an average age of 24, they have all learned English for over 10 years. None has the experience of studying abroad. They were paid for their participation. Table 1 lists all the basic information of participants.

Table 1. Basic Information of Participants

Characteristics	Gender		Undergraduate Major		Postgraduate Admission	
	Male	Female	English	Non-English	Exam	Recommended
Number	4	6	7	3	5	5

The research consisted of two parts. The first part required each participant to complete a

self-assessment questionnaire on basic information and self-assessment of English proficiency and translation competences. There was no time limit to fill in the form, and the questionnaire was handed to the researcher before the interview. The second part was an interview conducted in a clean and comfortable classroom with sound insulation. Participants were informed that the entire interview would be recorded. The interview lasted for half an hour, during which the researcher recorded vital information. Participants were interviewed individually.

The recordings of ten participants' interviews amounted to 314 minutes, with 47497 words transcribed (originally in Chinese, and later translated into English). The transcriptions were then further encoded into 868 coded segments under the three-level coding method and value coding method. Based on the research orientation, 769 valid segments were selected for in-depth analysis.

3.2 Data Analysis

MAXQDA, a computer-aided data analysis software, was used as the analysis tool to facilitate the coding and analysis of the collected empirical data under the three-level coding method (open coding, axis coding, and selective coding) (Creswell, 2007) and the values coding method proposed by Saldaña (2013).

Regarding the data coding process, open coding was employed to generate the original concepts directly derived from the existing concepts and actual situations with the assistance of values coding. The authors merged and summarized the answers of MTI students in the interview to form primary categories, which further reflect their values, attitudes or beliefs in values coding, as shown in Table 2. This process entailed repeated readings of the data to ensure accuracy and reliability.

In the following main axis coding stage, the author observed the open coding and values coding results of ten participants and then summarized them into the main 13 categories: (1) Reasons why MTI students choose MTI; (2) Views of MTI students on training systems; (3) MTI students' perception on the status of MTI; (4) MTI students' interest in English; (5) MTI students' experiences in using English; (6) Characteristics of MTI students' English proficiency; (7) Phenomena and reasons why MTI students reduce English use; (8) Translation experiences of MTI students; (9) How MTI students view the role and position of translators in translation; (10) Characteristics of MTI students' translation competences; (11) MTI students' attitude towards translation tools; (12) MTI students' recognition of translator professionalism; (13) MTI students' considerations in career choices.

Table 2. Examples of Open Coding and Values Coding

Values codes	Primary category	Original material
S10' attitude towards teachers is negative	S10's thoughts on teachers	<i>I think the college doesn't pay much attention to the arrangement of teachers, because most of our teachers are from linguistics, and only two or three have real translation experiences, which is very insufficient for MTI education.(S10)</i>

None	S5's undergraduate university and major	<i>I majored in Business English when I was an undergraduate student at Hainan University.(S5)</i>
S6's attitude towards academic major: MA's admission is burdensome	S6's reason for not choosing an academic major	<i>Because there is a second foreign language exam in the postgraduate entrance examination for academic masters, I can't speak a second foreign language.(S6)</i>

During the selective coding stage, the core categories were established based on the research goals. These categories include the construction of graduate student identity, L2 user identity, and translator identity. The above 13 kinds of categories were then classified under these three core categories, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Selective Coding

Core code	Secondary code
Construction of graduate student identity	(1) Reasons why MTI students choose MTI
	(2) Views of MTI students on training systems
	(3) MTI students' views on the status of MTI
Construction of L2 user identity	(4) MTI students' interest in English
	(5) MTI students' experiences in using English
	(6) Characteristics of MTI students' English proficiency;
	(7) Phenomena and reasons why MTI students reduce English use
Construction of translator identity	(9) How MTI students view the role and position of translators in translation
	(10) Characteristics of MTI students' translation competences
	(11) MTI students' attitude towards translation tools
	(12) MTI students' recognition of translator professionalism
	(13) MTI students' considerations in career choices

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Characteristics Analysis of MTI Students' Multiple Identities

4.1.1 The Characteristics of MTI Students' Graduate Student Identity

Based on the results, the participants' graduate student identity exhibits several significant characteristics. Firstly, the participants' interest in graduate student identity motivated them to choose MTI. The major identity that links "I" and "MTI student" revolves around the field of translation. All participants cited their interest in translation as the driving force behind their decision to pursue MTI. As exemplified in Example (1) and (2), the participants expressed an interest in MTI, anticipating

broad development prospects in the field of translation.

- (1) *“Because I was highly interested in English and translation, then I just want to pursue further study, I feel that this major will be very interesting and the profession as a translator is still promising.”* (S10)
- (2) *“Because I was suddenly interested in translation, and I think the translator is excellent.”* (S1)

While in Example (3) and (4), previous experiences in the language-related study have intensified participants’ interest and recognition in graduate student identity.

- (3) *“I was recommended to be admitted to be here. The first point is that I wanted to study MTI before I came here. I think translation attracts me. The second point is that I prefer to do various English volunteers and serve as translators. I think MTI is very helpful for me in various jobs in the future.”* (S5)
- (4) *“I think my interest in translation is from undergraduate teachers, whose personalities attract me. Once in class, a teacher showed her proficiency in seven languages, and after two hours of communicating with you, she would imitate your accent and tone, I felt so amazing.”* (S2)

Second, there was some divergence between actual graduate student identity and expected graduate student identity, resulting in negative emotions. Ten participants ended all courses after one academic year, affected by curricula, teachers, environment and their psychological conditions, their graduate student identities were continually being constructed, but their attitudes towards MTI were non-optimistic. When asked whether the MTI curricula met their anticipation, 100% of participants responded negatively.

All participants claimed that the MTI course didn’t match their original expectations, primarily due to the unreasonable curricular structure. The existing MTI curricula were heavily skewed towards theoretical courses, with few practical courses offered. This is shown in the Example (5) and (6).

- (5) *“There were few practical courses. I like the undergraduate courses that were very practical and not theoretical.”*(S4)
- (6) *“It didn’t meet my expectations. In fact, I have suggested it to my supervisor so many times. When I came here and looked at the timetables, I was confused. We were studying literature rather than translation, but I think the focus of our courses should be on practical abilities.”*(S5)

As a matter of fact, participants were eager to master translation skills from practical courses. Table 4 shows MTI students’ preferences in terms of courses:

Table 4. Participants' Favorite MTI Courses

Participants	Favorite MTI courses
S1	English translation of Chinese classics
S2	English translation of Chinese classics
S3	Interpretation
S4	Chinese Language and Culture
S5	Interpretation
S6	Interpretation
S7	Systemic Functional Linguistics
S8	Interpretation
S9	Translation Appreciation
S10	Interpretation

It was evident that five out of ten participants identified Interpretation as their favorite MTI course. As exemplified in Example (7), participants can improve translation competences by translation-related knowledge, professional rules, ethics and qualities, bilingual conversion abilities, and proficiency in using translation tools from practical courses, which can encourage them to actively construct graduate student identity.

- (7) *“It’s more practical, it has actually exercised your ability to translate, because I think translation indeed requires you to continuously practice, and then the teacher will give you feedback to help you gain improvement so that the progress of translation ability can be seen.”*(S6)

Nevertheless, despite the numerous courses offered, only one or two can provide the necessary confidence and nutrition for participants to construct their self-identity. The considerable gap between participants’ high expectations and realistic courses has led to disappointment with their major identity. Furthermore, participants’ negative emotions towards major have not been ameliorated, leading to the weakening recognition of their graduate student identity. When asked if participants were proud of being an MTI student, only three participants expressed their pride, and 70% of the participants’ recognition of graduate student identity was not high. Example (8) and (9) demonstrate how the sense of pride for S2 and S3 originated from English, suggesting that their positive emotions of graduate student identity were consistent with English student identity rather than MTI student identity.

- (8) *“My pride was from an academic speech where the speaker said language helped enlighten people, and from that moment I thought I am excellent because lots of people who can’t speak English will admire me”* (S2)

- (9) *“Common people can’t exchange with the outside world without English so that English is irreplaceable”* (S3)

Regarding why participants were not proud of being an MTI student, Example (10) and (11) shed light on the underlying reasons: under the current MTI training system, participants lacked confidence in their translation competences and their colleges, leading to their disappointment with MTI program. Eventually, the construction of participants' graduate student identity has been hindered by their negative emotions.

(10) *"I've got rare achievements during school life. I doubted that in our apartment doing translation practices is regarded as ignoring our proper occupation just because our teachers do work in the academic area. By the way, the qualities of my peers are not good as they are supposed to be."* (S4)

(11) *"I'm not proud, there were no useful courses helping me become a professional translator and I have to learn translation skills by myself during the majority of my time."*(S6)

4.1.2 The Characteristics of MTI Students' L2 User Identity

According to the results, participants' L2 user identity exhibits the following characteristics. First, at the initial stage of second language acquisition, participants' interests and strengths in English interacted and developed concurrently. From the self-assessment questionnaires, all participants have been studying English for more than ten years since childhood. Half of MTI students developed an interest in English during the early stage in language learning, manifested in Example (12):

(12) *"I have always been very interested in English since the beginning of elementary school. Because my elementary school was in Shenzhen, the whole environment was excellent, and I also had some extracurricular English classes from the first grade. The teachers were outstanding. Their teaching methods were completely in the Western form. The whole circumstance was perfect, so my interest in English has been solid."* (S10)

Example (13) illustrates a different scenario where participants' interest in English did not manifest in the early stage of their English learning. Instead, their interest in the second language developed overtime during the L2 acquisition process. Unexpectedly excellent performance in English has shaped participants' L2 learner identity with high self-confidence and growing interest, stimulating them to invest and engage more in English.

(13) *"When I was first in touch with English, my mother took me to extra-curricular English classes, and then I was really annoyed with no spare time. At that time, my family tutor took me to read English every day for a long time, and then I felt as if I was not so resistant. Later, I took the initiative to read English with her every day, and then my interest in English was born. Then in my junior high school, there was a foreign teacher in the class whom I communicated with a lot. After these experiences, I found out that English was fascinating, and I want to make efforts to perform well in English."* (S5)

Because of the lack of perceived benefits and an accessible bilingual environment, participants reduced their investment and engagement in English user identity. When asked about their preferred activities in English, participants' answers were similar and universal, such as listening to English songs, watching

English movies and US TV series, reading English books, etc. In terms of English output, Example (14) and (15) show that participants had limited opportunities to use English in their daily lives, and communication with people around them was primarily in Chinese, even with their teachers or supervisors.

(14) *"I scarcely use English in daily life because there is no accessible environment."*(S10)

(15) *"I prefer a virtual conversation with myself in the brain, because when I want to practice an oral topic, the people around me may not have time or interest. At this time, I need to simulate the situation by myself."*(S7)

Consequently, when asked about unforgettable experiences in English using, only one participant narrated an experience during the MTI study where she was an interpreter in Canton Fair in Example (16). In this situation, the present L2 user identity was not able to become a significant personal label for participants because there were scarce opportunities to use English, and they reduced investment in L2 user identity for economizing capitals. Reducing investment engagement in L2 user identity impaired the bilingual proficiency of MTI students and eventually hindered the construction of L2 user identity.

(16) *"The most memorable experience was working as an interpreter in Hong Kong after I became an MTI student. That was the first time I acted as an interpreter. It was challenging, but I finally completed the task successfully. I feel wonderful."* (S3)

Owing to the neglect of L2 user identity construction, participants' dissatisfaction with their English proficiency ultimately resulted in weak L2 user identity. As posited by the investment model (Darvin & Norton, 2015), investment in L2 use is indispensable for the continuous construction of L2 user identity. When asked if participants were satisfied with their English proficiency, none of them responded positively. To provide a clearer understanding of their recognition of English proficiency, the participants were asked to score their English proficiency on a ten-point scale (including listening, speaking, reading and writing,), in the self-assessment questionnaire.

Table 5 shows the results of the questionnaire, indicating that scores ranged from 5-point to 9-point and only one "9-point" appeared. Four MTI students (S1, S5, S6, and S7) believed that they performed better in input abilities (Listening and reading) than in output abilities (Speaking and writing) while S10 thought his output abilities were better than input abilities in English. S9 gave the lowest scores for all abilities to show her dissatisfaction.

Table 5. Results of Participants' Self-assessment of English Proficiency

Participants	English proficiency			
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
S1	7	6	8	6
S2	7	7	7	8
S3	7	8	8	7
S4	6	6	8	7
S5	7	5	8	7
S6	9	8	8	6
S7	8	6	7	6
S8	7	6	8	8
S9	5	5	5	5
S10	5	7	6	7

In the interview, the researcher asked participants to identify their strongest English proficiency areas, S1, S3 and S4 said that they performed the best in reading, while S6 and S7 thought that their listening skills were their strongest suit. At the same time, S2, S5, S8, S9, and S10 chose writing. As shown in Example (17) and (18), the interview results aligned with their assessment in the questionnaire, which confirmed the explicit recognition of participants on their own L2 user identities.

(17) *"The main reason for weakness in the rest of my English proficiency is that I lack practice, like listening. In fact, my listening ability was particularly poor, but now that I have started practicing since this semester, my listening has improved a lot. As for speaking, it is mainly because I did not find a bilingual environment. Then I was really too lazy in writing, and I rarely write in English without an assignment requirement."* (S3)

(18) *"I can do best in listening because I often watch English movies, then I usually train a little bit more listening. In fact, my reading and writing abilities are OK, because I used to do numerous practices for exams. Speaking is less practiced, so I think my speaking ability should still be relatively weak because it requires you to practice systematically. However, I think unless there is a need to get certificates, on that occasion you have to show your spoken English to others, most of the time, we still communicate and explain in Chinese with others, who refuse to accept an English talk."*(S7)

In Example (17), S3 acknowledged her weakness in English proficiency, but she lacked the motivation to overcome her laziness without an accessible bilingual environment. Therefore, she was not determined to make up for her shortcomings. From Example (18), S7's L2 user identity is constructed through daily use, such as watching English movies and American dramas, which were all beneficial ways to combine L2 use with an individual's interests. But in the face of her shortcomings, S7

remained content with her current level of proficiency, believing that there was no need for improvement unless preparing for a certificate test.

4.1.3 The Characteristics of MTI Students' Translator Identity

The results also reveal the following characteristics of the participants' translator identity.

First, participants perceived the translator as a bridge in the translation process. In response to questions regarding the relationship between the translator and the original, the original author and the readers in the translation process, all participants argued in Example (19) and (20) that translator served as a medium and translator's help to readers was irreplaceable. Hence the value of translator identity can be fully reflected in the readers' experiences.

(19) *"The translator acts as a bridge. The most important thing for a translator is to keep your original text intact and make it easier for your readers to accept your work."* (S1)

(20) *"I feel that the translator should be a bridge to convey the meaning of the original to the reader. So it's a flat bridge, you can't build it like an arch bridge"* (S2)

All participants agreed, to a significant extent, that the translator's primary responsibility is to provide readers with plain, faithful translations that accurately convey the meaning of the original text while minimizing information loss during the process.

(21) *"As a translator, I feel that the most important task is to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, ensuring that the information lost during the conversion process is as little as possible so that both parties can obtain accurate information."* (S1)

(22) *"I feel that no matter what method the translator uses, the most important task is to faithfully translate the source language into the target language so that readers can understand more than 90% of your content, so I prefer the full understanding by readers because the purpose of your translation is to serve readers"* (S10)

Obviously, Example (21) and (22) expressed the same opinion: in the translation process, the translator identity was generated with readers and was lighted up by readers' evaluation at the same time. From Example (23), participants also fully affirmed the translator's subjectivity and believed that the translator occupied the primary position in the translation process.

(23) *"In my opinion, the translator is in the primary position. Because, as I just said, I think there are potential meanings that need to be filled in by the translator. Original works just give the translator a frame, and sometimes the translator need to express all of its true meaning, to build an entire house, the translator may have to make up for some small details."* (S5)

Also, participants' confidence in translator identity was closely linked to their translation learning and practice. Translator identity construction is an investment that occurs during the process of learning translation-related knowledge and bilingual transformation. Of the participants, 70% reported having a certain level of confidence in engaging in English-Chinese or Chinese-English translation, while the remaining participants were diffident. Participants who were confident in the translator identity believed that it was their previous learning or practice that made outstanding contributions to creating

their positive emotion, as seen in Examples (24) and (25).

(24) *“I should still be confident because I have passed CATI 2. That is, this certificate gives me enough confidence, and there is enough translation practice in the process of preparing for the examination.”*(S1)

(25) *“I am confident, because I occasionally did part-time translation practice, and I also performed a long intensive review when I’m in preparation for getting a translation certificate. In continuous practice, I can see how others translated and then I will compare it with my own, after that, I will see some differences, such as word selection, sentence making, etc., because sometimes what we organized in our heart is totally different from what we translated, and I learn some translation skills in those differences.”* (S2)

According to Example (24) and (25), participants adopted varied approaches to invest in their translator identity, such as cultivating learning interest, accumulating progress from practice, and preparing for certificate tests.

For participants who lacked confidence in translation, their motivation to invest in learning and practice to enhance their translator identity was compromised. As seen in example (26), S3 did not invest in translation-related learning or practice due to a lack of motivation, which was manifested as laziness.

(26): *“I don’t have much confidence in interpreting and translating. I think my practice experience was less. Although it seems that I have spent some time on translation, I actually find that it was little. For interpreting experience, I have only acted as an interpreter in two exhibitions. As for translation, I may have translated about 100,000 words so far, but I think it is still very insufficient because it was completed a long time ago. If you don’t practice translation for a while, your translation competence will be rusty, which should be improved by the constantly positive stimulus.”* (S3)

Meanwhile, participants held a high level of respect for professional translators, yet they expressed reluctance to engage in the translator profession. An essential step of constructing a translator identity is recognizing the vocation of “translator”. When asked about the possibility of AI translation technology replacing human translators in the future, all participants believed that human translators were irreplaceable as Example (27) shows.

(27) *“It will not, because translation conveys thoughts and thinking of humans, which can’t be fully understood by machines. I think that AI technology can be used to improve our translation efficiency by means of playing auxiliary functions, but in general, everything must come through human control.”* (S4)

Surprisingly, none of the participants considered becoming a professional translator in their career planning, with 40% of them preferring teachers as their vocational choices and here are the complete results: a programmer in Internet industry (S1), a white-collar worker (S2), a foreign trade sales or teacher (S3), English-related jobs (S4), a commerce operator (S5), a teacher or HR (S6), a teacher (S7), a teacher in vocational high school or senior high school (S9) and English-related jobs in finance (S10).

Example (28) and (29) demonstrate the perspectives expressed by the MTI students regarding their career planning:

(28) *“In terms of career planning, I might choose to engage in the Internet industry because the market for translation is too small. The issue of income will also be considered.”* (S1)

(29) *“I plan to apply for a vocational high school or junior high school teacher. Regarding career planning, I must first consider my personality. My personality is relatively calm and quiet. If my work is not stable, I will be a bit worried. I will feel that a stable job is more secure. Another consideration is doing full-time translation may be very risky.”* (S9)

Concluded from Example (28) and (29), participants considered various factors when planning their careers, such as income, industry prospects, personality, and job stability. Unexpectedly, becoming a professional translator did not attract the participants' attention. Regarding reasons why MTI students refused the vocational identity of translator, Example (30) and (31) have an inkling of the matter.

Besides, two other reasons illustrated in Example (30) and (31) hinder participants from pursuing the vocational identity of the translator. The first one was that becoming a qualified translator requires prominent capabilities in translation, which many participants felt they did not possess. The second one was that the translators' income was not proportional to the high threshold of being a translator.

(30) *“I think I will regard translators as one of my ultimate goals, but my current occupational abilities were not good enough to help me become a translator. I have paid attention to a few freelance translators, and then I think they are compelling. But for myself, I still do something else down to earth, and I think it is more difficult to be a freelance translator. Under the current circumstances that my translation competences are not very strong, and I do not have the resource of interpersonal connections, it is not realistic to graduate to do freelance.”* (S3)

(31) *“It doesn't mean that you can be a translator if you say you are interested in translation. What you have to consider is to improve your translation competence first. If you are going to be a translator, your translation-related knowledge must be learned very well. So I can only say I like translation, there is still a big gap between the real translator and me.”* (S7)

Discussions above revealed a noteworthy concern among participants, namely that they perceive themselves as lacking the necessary competences to become a professional translator and therefore prefer to pursue opportunities in other industries. This may be due, in part, to the failure of educational institutions to effectively improve participants' translation competences, which are far from meeting professional standards. Additionally, participants held stereotyped perceptions of the translation industry as unstable and less competitive compared to other industries. This suggests that participants may lack a comprehensive understanding of the translation industry, which could be improved with more exposure to translation companies and industry practices.

4.2 The Interactions of MTI Students' Multiple Identities

4.2.1 The Interaction between MTI Students' Graduate Student Identity and L2 User Identity

Participants' L2 learner identity and L2 user identity had a construction history of over 12 years, which had intimate interactions with their student identity. Participants' well-developed L2 user identity enabled them to obtain valuable English-related or translated qualifications (See Table 5), which supported the favorable construction of their student identity.

Nevertheless, when participants engaged in MTI learning, they experienced negative emotions towards the MTI training system. As discussed above, the confusion and ambiguity of the entire MTI training system made participants doubt and felt dissatisfied with their major. Their negative emotions then affected their self-cognition, professional emotions, and studying behaviors.

Furthermore, participants experienced difficulties in discovering perceived benefits from their graduate student identity, coupled with a lack of accessible environment to use English. This resulted in reduced investment and engagement in their L2 user identity, while the status of their mother tongue identity gradually surpassed their L2 user identity. Even when pursuing language-related certificates, participants no longer put in as much effort as they did when preparing for the postgraduate entrance examination. Negative emotions stemming from their graduate student identity further reduced their motivations to invest and engage in their L2 user identity, as illustrated in Example (32) and (33):

(32) *"In my mind, courses related to English proficiency need to be set up, such as courses that train listening or reading ability. Although we are an English or translation major, we actually lack a good environment to use and practice our language proficiency. Our listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not good enough, I feel."* (S2)

(33) *"I think it is still necessary. To be honest, I feel that my English proficiency after graduate study is not as high as when I was preparing for the postgraduate entrance examination. Because undergraduate universities offered various advanced English courses, which focused on grammar and vocabulary. However, the current course seems to be too theoretical, and my enthusiasm for learning becomes lower, so my English proficiency has dropped."* (S8)

Example (32) and (33) demonstrate participants' awareness of the importance of English proficiency, but also their perception of a dearth of related training courses in their MTI program. These examples are indicative of a weakening of participants' L2 user identity weakened, and a desire for their educational institutions to provide support for the maintenance and strengthening of this identity. However, the passive learning attitude cultivated by their graduate student identity impeded participants' initiative in constructing the L2 user identity. The negative emotions associated with their graduate student identity provoked them to blame the education institutions and the training system without thinking about how to improve their English proficiency by themselves.

4.2.2 The Interaction between MTI Students' L2 User Identity and Translator Identity

The continuity of identity habitus is a structural mechanism that shapes identity from within the

individual. From the perspective of identity construction, individuals acquire lasting identity habits through long-term historical practice, defining “who I am” and “what group I belong to”. These habits consistently promote the emergence of new identity in encounters with new experiences. Due to the continuity of identity habitus, during the construction of MTI students’ multiple identities, the already formed L2 user identity had a substantial restrictive effect on their translator identity from two facets.

Firstly, participants’ interest in language played a significant role in their L2 user identity and extended to the construction of their translator identity. This psychological feature motivated them to continuously construct their L2 user identity for over a decade. This interest was then carried into the initial stages of their translator identity construction because the core task of translators was language conversion. Therefore, when participants chose to apply for MTI, the underlying impetus was their interest in translation.

Secondly, the continuity of identity habitus caused an imbalance in language competences in both participants’ L2 user identity and translator identity. Results from self-assessment questionnaires and interviews revealed that among the four kinds of English proficiency, participants regarded only one or two as outstanding, which led to their dissatisfaction with the L2 user identity. To clarify their self-assessment of translation competences, participants were required to score their translation competences on a ten-point scale in the self-assessment questionnaire.

The results indicated that the translation competences of each participant were uneven, with only one or two competences being notable. From Example (34), an imbalance in English and translation competences resulted in participants’ dissatisfaction with their translator identity.

(34) *“I think so; I basically rely on the language foundation of my undergraduate for translation. After one year of study, my translation ability didn't gain improvement. There is still a long way to go before becoming a translator.” (S5)*

Table 6 below shows the results of ten participants’ translation competences self-assessment:

Table 6. Results of Participants’ Self-assessment of Translation Competences

Translation competences	Participants									
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Bilingual sub-competence	7	8	7	7	7	8	5	7	5	8
Knowledge about translation sub-competence	7	7	6	6	7	6	7	6	5	5
Extra-lingual sub-competence	6	6	6	8	6	6	7	6	5	4
Strategic sub-competence	8	6	6	7	8	6	6	6	8	4
Instrumental sub-competence	7	6	7	5	6	9	7	4	5	3
Psycho-physiological components	7	7	6	7	6	7	7	6	5	5

This phenomenon confirms the continuity from the identity habitus of L2 user identity to translator identity. Participants were unable to reinforce their L2 user identity due to the lack of an accessible bilingual environment. Without the intention to initiate a “change”, participants gradually adapted to their weakening L2 user identity. This adaptability then carried over into the construction of translator identity, resulting in a loss of motivation to enhance their translation professionalism. Over time, participants’ recognition of their translator identity also diminished.

4.2.3 The Interaction between MTI Students’ Graduate Student Identity and Translator Identity

The aim of MTI education is to transform MTI students’ graduate student identity into translator identity. However, based on the results of the interviews, affected by environment, behaviors, abilities, beliefs, emotions, and attitudes, participants’ understanding of self-identity remained limited to “I am only a graduate student in translation major”, far from the conception of “I am a translator”. The transformation process was impeded by two main aspects: a stereotypical recognition mode on graduate student identity and the unqualified MTI students’ graduate student identity under the existing training system.

First, in terms of self-positioning, participants subjectively defined themselves as “learners” or “students of translator major” under the stereotypical recognition mode on student identity. This made it difficult for participants to construct their self-identity from the perspective of “translators” or “prospective translators”. Simultaneously, educational institutions and employers only recognized participants’ graduate student identity rather than their translator identity. Educational institutions focused on teaching participants translation-related knowledge rather than guiding them to become professional translators; the employers have even offered lower translation remuneration for MTI students than regular market price as Example (35) shows. While participants were still in the learning possess, their student identity differentiates from learning professional knowledge as translator identity.

(35) *“I applied for part-time jobs in three translation companies some time ago. The salary given by the first one was 35 Yuan / thousand words, which was very low. Then I turned my aim to a relatively large translation company. I have spent a long time doing the trial translation, but I didn’t pass. Then I looked for the third one in Shenzhen, and I passed its evaluation, but this company didn’t arrange any text for me, by the way, its payment was 75 to 88 Yuan / thousand words, still lower than the original translator price.”* (S3)

Second, the performance of participants’ graduate student identity was found to be inadequate due to their focus on coping with courses, essays, and teachers in the existing training system, instead of actively engaging in translation practice. This resulted in a hindrance to the development of their translator identity, as a strong translator identity requires MTI students to master not only professional competences but also occupational abilities (including familiarity with professional rules and possessing high professional ethics and translator quality). However, the interview results reveal that the curriculum system, teacher arrangement, and training methods had not fulfilled their responsibilities of instructing participants to master professional competences when transitioning from graduate student

identity to translator identity. Compared to occupational abilities, diplomas, academic papers, and theoretical knowledge dominated in the entire MTI training system, which triggered the decreased translator identity of participants.

4.3 Factors Influencing Participants' Multiple Identities

The present research has revealed that the construction of MTI students' multiple identities is significantly influenced by both educational and social environment. Specifically, the educational environment includes the curriculum system, teachers, students, and training methods, while the social environment pertains to the income of translators.

4.3.1 Curriculum System

The MTI curriculum system includes training programs, curriculum arrangements, teaching materials, and course contents. From the perspective of knowledge acquisition, the MTI curriculum system involves the learning activities that "prospective translators" undertake during the study period, probation period, and internship period under the joint guidance of teachers and educational institutions. The primary goal of the MTI curriculum system is to help MTI students acquire translation-related knowledge, improve translation competences, and enrich translation experiences, which chiefly distinguishes their student identity from the student identity of master majors.

However, the MTI curriculum system is not only the source of major identity but also the cause of participants' disappointment with their student identity. On the one hand, the lack of practicality in MTI curriculum system means that participants rarely had access to numerous translation practices. The majority of participants' time was spent on irrelevant theoretical linguistic knowledge, with few opportunities to make full use of their language competences. It can be predicted that participants' graduate student identity and L2 user identity gradually faded under the current MTI curriculum system.

On the other hand, participants can't learn practical translation skills and translation-related knowledge from "over-theoretical" courses. Instead, they focus on coping with course papers or teachers, leading to a lack of scientific improvement in their professionalism as there were few approaches for them to learn how to become professional translators. Consequently, participants invariably regarded themselves as students rather than prospective translators.

4.3.2 Teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in the MTI curriculum system as they are the executors, instructors and guides of MTI students' translator identity. The effectiveness of MTI teachers depends on their practical experiences in translation, their understanding of the translation industry, their comprehension of the nature of MTI, the number and structure of teachers, their teaching attitude, and professionalism. In brief, MTI teachers represent relevant media between MTI students' graduate student identity and translator identity.

Nevertheless, the observed MTI teachers' lack of practical experience in translation has been a concern for participants. Most MTI teachers specialize in the academic field, which means they lack a

reasonable comprehension of what qualities professional translators should possess. As a result, participants are unable to learn about the beliefs, psychological conditions, problem-solving skills, creativity, and capabilities of emotion control that professional translators should possess.

Besides, the academic research focus of MTI teachers has contributed to participants' resistance and fluctuation in the construction of their graduate student identity. The tendency of MTI teachers to prioritize academic content over practical training has hindered the development of participants' professional competences and occupational abilities, which are crucial for building a strong translator identity.

4.3.3 Students

The factor "students" refers to the role of MTI students' self-identity in postgraduate study, including their learning abilities and motivations, recognition of MTI, professional foundation, and learning attitudes.

Participants who are admitted into MTI possess excellent learning abilities and a professional foundation, which enables them to construct their graduate student identity and L2 identity actively. But due to the profound influence of the exam-oriented education system, the motivations and learning attitudes of participants are primarily driven by visible goals such as preparing for exams or completing coursework.

However, negative emotions towards MTI can lead to passive learning attitudes, constantly controlling their behaviors during the MTI study. Hence, when problems arose in the construction process of their L2 user identity and graduate student identity, participants lost sufficient motivation to change the status quo and instead passively expect education institutions and teachers to help them complete the reconstruction of multiple identities.

Furthermore, participants' focus on learning restricted the construction of their translator identity, as they tend to regard themselves as students rather than prospective translators. This stable student identity hindered the development of their translator identity, and when education institutions fail to make dominant contributions to the construction of their professional identity, participants tend to complain rather than think about how to become a "translator" from their own perspective.

4.3.4 Training Methods

Training methods are a crucial factor that influences the construction of MTI students' multiple identities from a macro perspective, including the education administration system, academic atmosphere, translation practice opportunities, subject construction, tuition, and dissertations.

Among these factors, translation practice opportunities are relevant initiatives for MTI students to transfer graduate student identity into translator identity, as it allows them to apply translation-related knowledge into practice and comprehend translators' psychological status, creativity, and ethics. Nevertheless, the interview results unveil that the majority of participants' practice opportunities were self-sought, while colleges basically used assignments to replace translation practice, which was inadequate for mastering occupational abilities. As a result, participants were still acting as graduate

students in the translation process.

Besides, the lack of a bilingual environment in MTI education was also one of the consequences of misdirected training methods. Although the postgraduate entrance examination has already tested the bilingual proficiency of participants, being translators required higher standards for language competences. The long-term use of the mother tongue use in participants' school life has been decreasing their L2 user identity, which cannot be changed through mere effort.

Moreover, the graduation evaluation system of participants still relied on an academic thesis, which has triggered complaints and dissatisfaction among participants. Participants expected the practicality feature of the major identity to penetrate the entire training process, yet the core of the graduation evaluation system was the thesis. From Example (36), it should be more appropriate to evaluate students' performance in translation practice as graduation evaluation, given that MTI is a professional major.

(36) *"The requirement for graduation is to publish journal papers. I think this is extremely not appropriate. The college should give us opportunities to go out for translation practice, and then we use our internship certificates and practice results for graduation evaluation, which is more suitable for MTI, I think."* (S3)

Under such circumstances, the high tuition fees of MTI made participants feel "deceived" as some universities that establish MTI programs lack qualified teachers, as shown in Example (37) :

(37) *"Because the universities that establish MTI later are very ordinary. And the teachers in many schools are not qualified. I think the purpose of a large scale of schools to establish MTI is to make money, mainly because MTI's tuition is costly."* (S9)

4.3.5 Translators' Income

The interview findings revealed that participants' negative perception of their translator identity was influenced by the scale and development of the translation market when discussing career planning and part-time experiences. Participants identified two critical shortcomings in the current translation market that hindered them from being translators: the small scale of the translation market and its unstable development.

Compared to teachers or the Internet industry, which participants preferred, the prospect of the translation industry was stagnant and limited due to the lack of commercial giants in the translation market. Freelance work was the norm for most translators, which created the impression that working in a translation company was not promising, and stable income was not guaranteed.

While most participants recognized the basic requirements of aesthetic ability, creativity, and bilingual ability for the profession of translators, there was also a common view among them that becoming a professional translator required a significant amount of effort. However, the imbalance between the unfavorable income and toilsome job duties of translators was discouraging for MTI students in terms of their professional identity, as shown in Example (38).

(38) *“When we consider our professions, the first thing we must consider is high-paying. But now the salary of the translators is too low, especially those who engage in the translation. Thus my classmates say that they want to switch to other jobs.”* (S8)

Furthermore, the unequal treatment for participants in part-time jobs was also a common phenomenon, where employers generally treated them as students rather than prospective translators, deliberately reducing their income. This has become an unwritten rule in the industry, leaving participants with a misperception that the income of translators was incompatible with their endeavors. Thus, the construction of the translator identity of participants has suffered unreparable damage.

5. Conclusion

The current research explored the basic characteristics of MTI students' multiple identities, analyzed the interrelationship among MTI students' identities, and investigated the factors influencing the dynamic construction of their multiple identities.

First, MTI students' multiple identities possess different characteristics. (1) MTI students' interest in graduate student identity motivated them to choose MTI. However, there were disagreements between actual graduate student identity and expected graduate student identity after enrollment, which left MTI students with negative emotions. MTI students' negative emotions towards their major led to the weakening recognition of their graduate student identity; (2) MTI students' interest and advantages in English interacted and developed together. Because of the lack of access to bilingual environment, MTI students reduced their investment and engagement in English user identity. Ultimately, due to the neglect of L2 use, MTI students' dissatisfaction in English proficiency resulted in weak L2 user identity; (3) MTI students regarded the translator as a bridge in the translation process, and MTI students' confidence in translator identity came from translation learning and practice. Although MTI students showed respect for professional translators, they expressed their reluctance to engage in the translator profession, illustrating their decreased translator professional identity.

Second, due to the dynamicity and multiplicity of identity, the construction and development of MTI students' multiple identities were not balanced, and there existed interactions between the three identities, which can be concluded into three main patterns: (1) MTI students' negative emotions in graduate student identity led to decreased investment and engagement in L2 user identity; (2) Due to the continuity of identity habitus, the already formed L2 user identity had a substantial restrictive effect on translator identity from two aspects: on the one hand, the interest in language played a major role in MTI students' L2 user identity, which was extended to the construction of their translator identity. On the other hand, an imbalance in language competences happened in both MTI students' L2 user identity and translator identity; (3) A stereotypical recognition mode on student identity and unqualified graduate student identity have hampered the conversion from MTI students' graduate student identity into translator identity.

Third, the present study reveals that the educational and social environment had a significant influence on the construction of MTI students' multiple identities. In detail, the educational environment includes the curriculum system, teachers, students, and training methods, and the social environment, specifically refers to translators' income. (1) The MTI curriculum system aims to help MTI students acquire translation-related knowledge and improve translation competences; (2) Teachers are the guiders of MTI students' graduate student identity and translator identity; (3) The factor "students" refers to the role of MTI students' self-identity in graduate study and translation practice; (4) Training methods influence the construction of MTI students' multiple identities from a relatively macro perspective; (5) Meanwhile, unfavorable translators' income in the social environment has been a stumbling block for MTI students to become translators.

Our work makes both theoretical and pedagogical contributions for future research. Theoretically, it first investigated the features and influencing factors of MTI students' translator identity from MTI students' psychological conditions, which provides empirical evidence for the study of the dynamicity and multiplicity of the translator identity. Secondly, the results found three interaction patterns of MTI students' three identities, and MTI students' translator identity was hindered by their weakening L2 user identity and graduate student identity, which might help with a complete and thorough understanding of multiple identities construction.

The pedagogical implication lies in several aspects. In the first place, emphasizing the practical orientation of the MTI training system is the key to increasing MTI students' recognition of their multiple identities. Secondly, observed from the results and discussions, MTI students were reluctant to engage in translator professions. Hence, there is a need for educational institutions to provide MTI students with more translation-related internship opportunities. Thirdly, the collages can fully explore the potential of MTI students' L2 user identity by creating an accessible bilingual environment. An accessible bilingual environment means that MTI students can make full use of their English competences through various kinds of educational and practical activities, such as participating in volunteer activities, hosting English corners, participating in English competitions, etc.

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