



The International Journal for  
Translation & Interpreting  
Research  
[trans-int.org](http://trans-int.org)

# Initial translation interference to reviser trainees in English-LOTE translation revision tasks

Haiyan Liang  
The University of Queensland, Australia  
[h.liang2@uq.edu.au](mailto:h.liang2@uq.edu.au)

DOI: 10.12807/ti.113202.2021.a06

**Abstract:** Initial translation interference refers to the impact of the initial translation on other-revisers. The factor of initial translation interference on reviser trainees has not been examined systematically. The current research investigates two related questions: How does trainees' revision performance relate to their translation performance? And how is trainees' revision performance impacted by the initial translated text they are provided with? A mixed research design of quantitative and semi-qualitative research methods is used for a more comprehensive analysis and a higher validity of the findings. The results suggest that good translator trainees tend to be also competent in revision, and poor translator trainees tend to be also weak at revision. However, no significant correlation is found for the intermediate group. The trainees tend to find revision tasks more challenging than the translation tasks and negative interference of the initial translation is prevalent both lexically and syntactically. They are very likely to be distracted and misled by the initial translation. The methodology and findings of this study have implications for translation researchers as well as educators.

**Keywords:** Translation revision; interference; NAATI; training.

## 1. Introduction

The importance of translation revision has been increasingly recognised in the past two decades (Künzli, 2007a; Martin, 2007; Mossop, 2007, 2014/2020; Robert & Van Waes, 2014; Van Rensburg, 2017). This is borne out by the publication of the European standard EN 15038:2006-08 *Translation Services - Service Requirements*<sup>1</sup> in 2006 (DIN), which explained that “quality is guaranteed not by the translation which is just one phase in the process, but by the fact of the translation being reviewed by a person other than the translator” (DIN, 2006, p. 11); also CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008 *National standard of Canada: Translation services*<sup>2</sup> in Canada (2008) and ASTM F2575-14 *Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation* (2014) in the US, which, inter alia, make reference to the processes and players involved in producing translations.

Translation revision – be it self-revision, other-revision or revision of machine translation – is an indispensable part of the professional translation process and translation quality assurance system. It benefits the translation

<sup>1</sup> This standard was later superseded by ISO 17100: 2015 *Translation Services: Requirements for Translation Services* in 2015 and further revised and superseded by ISO 17100:2015+A1:2017 bearing the same title in 2018 in EU countries and Britain.

<sup>2</sup> This standard was later superseded by CAN/CGSB-131.10-2017 *National standard of Canada: Translation services* in 2017 in Canada.

service provider (TSP), the translator, and the client. In contrast to the high market demand for revision, however, formal training of revisers is largely missing (Ipsen & Dam, 2016; Künzli, 2006a, 2006b; Rasmussen & Schjoldager, 2011) with the corresponding rarity of research on revision training. It is assertively under-investigated compared with the number of studies on translation practices, theories and teaching (Mossop, 2014/2020; Robert, 2012; Robert & Van Waes, 2014; Van Rensburg, 2017). According to Robert (2012), only approximately 50 studies in total, including theses and books, are found to be exclusively dedicated to translation revision. Even fewer studies are conducted from the didactic perspective (Ipsen & Dam, 2016; Künzli, 2006a, 2006b; Rasmussen & Schjoldager, 2011). The didactic revision procedure is essentially different from the professional revision procedure (Brunette, 2000) and is worth investigation.

## **2. Definitions, policies, parameters and issues of revision**

### ***2.1 Definitions of terminology***

Terminology needs to be clarified before further discussion is made as there is a “halo of fuzziness around the concept of revision” (Robert, 2008, p. 3), in official standards as well as in academic studies. For instance, the previous European standard *Translation services – Service requirements* (EN 15038:2006-08), the updated standard *Translation Services: Requirements for Translation Services* (ISO 17100:2015+A1:2017) (ISO, 2018) (“ISO 17100” hereafter) and the *National Standard of Canada: Translation services* (CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008) and its latest version bearing the same title (CAN/CGSB-131.10-2017) use “checking” for self-revision, and “revision” for revision by a person “other than the translator” (CGSB, 2008, p. 7, 2017, p. 9; DIN, 2006, p. 11; ISO, 2018, p. 10). Shih (2006) uses “self-checking” and “revision” for what is termed “self-revision” in Mossop (2014/2020). And Ko (2011) uses “checking” and “revision” for “other-revision” in Mossop (2014/2020). To clear up the confusion surrounding the terminology, “revision” is used in this article for the process whereby a reviser checks another translator’s work, with “other-revision” being used when the necessity arises to distinguish it explicitly from “self-revision”. “Self-revision” is deemed to be part of translation and is not the focus of discussion in this article.

### ***2.2 Revision policies in practice and revision competence***

Revision policies vary across regions and countries as to the perceived essentiality of a revision procedure before delivery of translation to clients. For instance, according to ISO 17100, TSPs across EU countries shall ensure that the translation is revised (ISO, 2018, p. 10). The same document prescribes that a reviser “other than the translator” (p. 10) must conduct the revision, which means that it is distinguished from self-checking or self-revision. However, revision is not a mandatory process in Canada, as the “TSP shall identify the need for revision, taking into account the abilities of the translator, the requirements of the client and the nature of the assignment” (CGSB, 2008, p. 7, 2017, p. 9). In the US, similarly, under ASTM F2575-14 (*Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation*), revision is not mandatory either, as the client and TSP can negotiate about the necessity of this step. However, it does state that the translation “may be of lesser quality than if the entire process had been followed” (ASTM International, 2014, Section 7.1).

The Australian translation industry is very different in the sense that there are no general requirements forcing a standard or industry-wide recommendations for revision applying to TSPs. For instance, Ko (2011), who had extensive hands-on experience in the market for over 20 years dealing with more than a dozen translation agencies, obtained guidelines from one agency

only. The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) and the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) work together to monitor service standards in the Australian language services industry. The current translation quality recommendations used in Australia, *Best Practices: For the Translation of Official and Legal Documents* (AUSIT, 2014), which offers “recommendations for the translation of official and legal documents” (p. 2), makes no mention of revision at all. However, for its new certification testing of professional translators, in 2019 NAATI expanded the old accreditation test format whose core consisted of two translation passages (chosen by candidates out of three provided) by including a non-specialised revision task as well. It is not known yet whether the aforesaid translation market standard will be amended accordingly to incorporate revision requirements or recommendations for TSPs in Australia. Certainly though, the relevant NAATI-endorsed higher education institutions now do need to prepare their enrolled students in terms of revision skills for the professional translator certification test.

People have very divided views regarding the focuses of revision in professional practice, the source text or the initial translation. ISO 17100, for instance, recommends that both self-revision and other-revision should focus on the initial translation while Horváth (2011) and Robin (2016) think self-revision tends to focus on the source text while other-revision concentrates on the initial translation. It is suggested in ASTM F2575 that the other-reviser should check the target text with close attention to the source text. Accordingly, an important distinction is made between unilingual versus comparative revisions (Brunette et al., 2005; Mossop, 2014/2020) or, in a similar tone, monolingual versus bilingual revising (Robert & Van Waes, 2014). In the process of unilingual revision, the main focus is on checking the initial translation for unidiomatic expressions, with the source text being referenced only occasionally. In a comparative revision, however, the translation is closely checked against the source text for accuracy.

How policies are implemented also varies from country to country, and from TSP to TSP. In Denmark for instance, the percentage of revised documents tends to vary from less than 50% to almost 100% (Rasmussen & Schjoldager, 2011). A similar situation is reported in Uotila (2017) regarding the practice in Finland. Although comparative revision is usually required, the reviser tends to focus on the target text, with the source text checked when illogical errors are identified in the target text. The translation tasks that are exempted from a revision process are usually done by highly skilled translators from whom translation quality is deemed practically assured, and/or by highly specialised freelancer translators, given that in-house revisers with the same expertise are not commonly available. There are also instances where the turnaround time is too tight to involve a revision process.

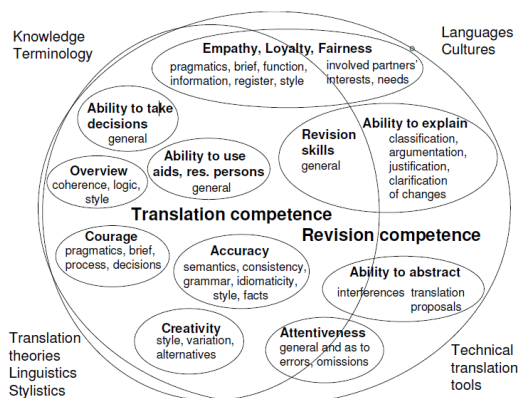


Figure 1. Combined Model of the Translation and Revision Competence (Hansen, 2009, p. 324)

With no reviser certification system available, it remains a question who can work as a reviser. In the Australian market, the reviser role may involve people of different backgrounds and levels of competence, including translators, bilingual people or even monolingual people (Ko, 2011). In the European market, TSPs usually recruit translators who have been proven reliable with their translation skills over time (Robin, 2016) – implicitly assuming that people with higher translation skills also have better revision skills. This assumption is supported by the combined model of translation competence and revision competence in Hansen (2009), as shown in Figure 1. Many elements are involved in the Hansen model, and while it is evident that revision competence includes all the elements found in translation competence, the requirements for a reviser are higher in terms of “ability to abstract”, among others. The essential element of translation competence is echoed in the more recent model in Robert, Remael and Ureel (2017).

Usually, experienced and reliable translators are asked to be revisers in light of the fact that the industry tends to assume that good translators are good revisers. However, neither the results in Van Rensburg (2017) on professionals nor those in Hansen (2008) on trainees support the idea. Longitudinal studies in Hansen (2008) compared five cohorts of bilingual translator trainees’ translation and revision performance from Danish to German over a span of five years from 2003 to 2007. Some of the participants were Danish L1 and some were German L1. The assessors used *good*, *acceptable* and *poor* as the evaluation categories and only the extreme results, *good* and *poor*, were compared. The students whose performances were acceptable in both tasks were ignored. It was found that some students who were good at translation were poor at revision and vice versa; similar results were also found with professionals. Significant as the study is – being the first and only empirical attempt at comparing translation competence with revision competence – the results must have been affected by the independent variables L1 and L2 (the participants’ first and second languages respectively), and its findings would be more convincing if these could be removed as it is assumed L1 and L2 revisers have different approaches to revision. Furthermore, as the translation text and the revision text were different, the degree of difficulty and the participants’ familiarity with the subject are two other possible variables. Third, since at least one of the two assessors (the study author herself) had the assumption that revision competence differs from translation competence, the marking may be biased. Whether the other assessor knew about the goal of the task was not mentioned. Last but not least, no statistical data were provided, so it was not clear to what extent good translators were not necessarily good revisers or whether being a good translator could even hinder being a good reviser.

### ***2.3 Parameters in revision testing/training***

In training and testing, a multiplicity of possible errors needs to be taken into account in light of professional practice. Two sets of parameters are proposed for these purposes respectively in Mossop (2014/2020) and NAATI (2020a). Mossop (2014/2020) proposes four groups of problems: meaning transfer, content, language and style, and presentation, with each group in turn including various parameters, as shown in Table 1. In his opinion, the list might be used in a revision training classroom and not used as a checklist in professional practice. It includes parameters for three different procedures distinguished in the South African Translators’ Institute (2007 as cited in Ko, 2011): proofreading that concerns presentation and typeset; revision that concerns accuracy of meaning, grammar, register, spelling and punctuation; and editing that concerns logic and smoothness. In a training program, this parameter set may be used as guidelines only for discussion with the students, rather than as marking criteria in testing. With such a broad categorization covering a wide range of parameters, it is rather impractical for pinpointing errors in a revision

text, as trainees would hardly know what to start with. Furthermore, Group D and the newly added Group E in Mossop (2020) are seldom, if ever, needed in a testing scenario.

Table 1. Summary of revision parameters and specific questions in Mossop (2014/2020)

Groups of Problems	Parameters	Specific questions to ask while revising
A. Meaning Transfer	<i>Accuracy</i>	Does the translation adequately reflect the message of the source text?
	<i>Completeness</i>	Are there any unjustified omissions and/or additions?
B. Content	<i>Logic</i>	Does the sequence of ideas make sense?
	<i>Facts</i>	Are there any errors related to facts, mathematics or concepts?
C. Language and Style	<i>Smoothness</i>	Are there good connections between sentences?
	<i>Tailoring</i>	Does the translation fit its use, medium and readers?
	<i>Sub-language</i>	Does the translation accord with the source text in genre and terminology, etc.?
	<i>Idiom</i>	Is the translation idiomatic?
	<i>Mechanics</i>	Is grammar, spelling, punctuation and house style used correctly?
D. Presentation	<i>Layout</i>	Is the layout correct, including spacing, margins, indentations, etc.?
	<i>Typography</i>	Are the typographic aspects, including bolding, underline, fonts and formatting correct?
	<i>Organisation</i>	Are headings, page numbers, table of contents, etc. properly organised?
E. Specifications	<i>Client Specifications</i>	Have the client's specifications been complied with?
	<i>Employer policy</i>	Have the agency's translation policies been complied with?

In contrast, NAATI's categorisation is more pragmatic and systematic for training and testing purposes. The list of error categories for the revision of a non-specialised translation task in the newly introduced NAATI translator certification test is published on NAATI's website (NAATI, 2020a). Test candidates are provided with this list and asked to identify the error category before providing the correct translation. Eight error categories across word, phrase and sentence levels are included: distortion, unjustified omission, unjustified insertion, inappropriate register, unidiomatic expression, error of grammar/syntax, and error of spelling and punctuation. The specifics of the errors are listed in Table 2.

This list provides an important guideline for translator/reviser training in Australia. Training facilities, such as the University of Queensland (UQ) as an example, have adjusted their course profiles and incorporated revision into their training program under this guideline. In the assessment rubrics, credits are given for both appropriate categorisation and revision, with the revision component considered more important than the categorisation. Pass requirements for revision skills establish that a candidate "(m)ostly demonstrates ability to identify and propose appropriate solutions for transfer and language errors, taking into account the specifications provided in the brief" and "(p)roduces a revised translation needing only minor additional revision. The revised translation contains few minor transfer and/or language errors" (NAATI, 2020b, p. 1). By contrast, the requirements for error categorisation state that the examinee will "categorise some errors appropriately" (NAATI, 2020b, p. 1), which is a much more lenient standard than what is expected in

regard to revision skills. This lenience is comprehensible given that a given error might be categorised as “unidiomatic” by some translators/trainees but as an “error of grammar” by others.

Table 2. List of Error Categories by NAATI (NAATI, 2020a)

Error Category	Specifics
Distortion	An element of meaning in the source text is altered in the target text.
Unjustified omission	An element of meaning in the source text is not transferred into the target text.
Unjustified insertion	An element of meaning that does not exist in the source text is added to the target text.
Inappropriate register	An expression or variety of language considered by a native speaker to be inappropriate to the specific context in which it is used.
Unidiomatic expression	An expression sounding unnatural or awkward to a native speaker irrespective of the context in which the expression is used, but the intended meaning can be understood.
Error of grammar, syntax	Error in structuring words, clauses and phrases of a language
Error of spelling	Error in forming words with letters or characters. Error in use of marks that separate sentences and their elements, and clarify meaning.
Error of punctuation	Error in use of marks that separate sentences and their elements, and clarify meaning. E.g. incorrect comma, full-stop, apostrophe, inverted commas, etc.

In comparing these two sets of parameters, Mossop’s and NAATI’s, we find they are very different despite the overlaps in places. Both sets, for instance, concern accuracy, idiomaticness, grammar, spelling and punctuation, etc., but the parameters in Mossop (2014/2020) tend to be generic umbrella terms. For instance, the term “mechanics” is used in Mossop (2014/2020) to encapsulate the error categories of grammar, spelling, punctuation and style, whereas NAATI (2020a) has separate error categories for grammar, spelling, punctuation and register. It is evident that NAATI’s categories are narrower and more specific, and thus more practical and feasible in training and testing as they make it relatively easier for trainees to comprehend what they are expected to do.

#### **2.4 Interferences impacting revision trainees**

One of the essential barriers to be overcome in the revision process is *interference*. The ability to avoid being affected by it is one feature of the “ability to abstract or distance oneself from ... others’ previous formulations and the ability to explain and argue for changes” (Hansen, 2008, p. 275). Hansen (2008) summarises four kinds of interference across the language pair of German and Danish in translation: lexical, syntactic, text-semantic and cultural. Cultural interference happens when culture specifics are transferred from one language into another with little adaptation. Translation does not only deal with two languages but also bring two cultures together, as culture is an integral element of language. However, perfect equivalence across languages and cultures hardly exists. The translator needs to constantly overcome cultural interferences and perform adjustments where necessary to bring the text to the target audience in an accessible way. Lexical interference mainly arises from loan words and phrases from the source language into the target language, such as cognates and prepositions. Syntactic interference refers to the unwanted transfer of sentence structure or word order. Text-semantic interference refers to the negative transfer of the use of pronouns and articles.

Another documented dimension of interference in translation revision in the existing literature is source-text interference (Ipsen & Dam, 2016; Mossop,

2014/2020; Peña Polliastri, 2009; Robert & Van Waes, 2014) as opposed to translation/target-text interference (Peña Polliastri, 2009). Contradictory hypotheses and findings are reported. It is proposed in Mossop (2014/2020) that the translation alone should be checked first, without referring to the source text to avoid possible interference from its wording. This hypothesis is supported by the empirical research on revision procedure in Ipsen and Dam (2016), who in the case of both professional revisers and trainees found that those who initially focus on the translation tend to perform better than those whose attention is directed to the source text. However, some other studies conclude that comparative revision tends to result in better quality, although it is also more effort-intensive and twice as costly (Brunette et al., 2005; Krings, 2001; Rasmussen & Schjoldager, 2011). Robert and Van Waes (2014) note no significant difference in terms of efficiency and quality between revisers focusing on the translation and those comparing it against the source text, although the latter method was reportedly better in terms of accurate and complete transfer of the source text than the former. All these findings are used as the basis in the current research.

The present author has been involved in the English-Chinese translator training program at the University of Queensland, Australia. In this program, trainees are provided with the English source text and the initial Chinese translation and asked to do the revision task by identifying and categorising the errors and proposing appropriate solutions. The present author, in marking their revision tasks, unexpectedly observes that even some high-performing trainees in translation tasks fail to identify some seemingly obvious errors in the initial translation. Additionally, the trainees tend to say in the classroom discussion that they are influenced by the initial translation and often neglect the errors. Based on these observations, the present author hypothesises that revision trainees suffer a significant amount of interference from the initial translation. The present study explores this dimension of interference from the initial translation and to what extent, if any, it poses challenges to revision trainees. This phenomenon that the influence of the initial translation persists in the revision process has not been previously investigated in an explicit manner. Accordingly, I propose the term “initial translation interference” (abbreviated to “T1 interference”) to refer to the impact of “others’ previous formulations” on revisers and reviser trainees in Hansen (2008, p. 275). The “initial translation”, the “target text” and the “translated text” are used interchangeably in this article to refer to LOTE-translation text (i.e. T1) provided to the revision trainees.

The literature discussed above shows that two questions have so far remained largely unanswered. Firstly, are good translator trainees necessarily good reviser trainees? Secondly, why do reviser trainees make mistakes? In light of the research gap and the present author’s hypothesis that trainees are influenced by the initial translation, this study proposes to answer two specific and related research questions: How does trainees’ revision performance relate to their translation performance? And how is trainees’ revision performance impacted by the initial translated text they are provided with? In so doing, the study also seeks to discover if and how reviser trainees are affected by T1 interference.

### **3. Research methodology and methods**

The current research uses a mixed research design of quantitative and semi-qualitative research methods for a more comprehensive analysis and a higher validity of the findings. The mixed research model is recommended in educational and social science research (Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Quantitative and semi-qualitative data analyses are conducted separately,

and the resultant data are triangulated at the final stage of data analysis. The triangulation technique uses multiple data collection methods to enhance research credibility and validity (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009) and is used in Robert (2014) on reviser problem-solving strategies, and in Ipsen and Dam (2016) on revision procedure. In the current study, quantitative and semi-qualitative data collected from translation tasks, two revision tasks and a semi-structured survey are triangulated to examine how trainees' revision performance and translation performance are correlated, and how they are influenced by the initial translated text they are provided with.

This research involves three stages. In Stage 1, a total of 52 participants studying at the University of Queensland from two intakes of students in their second semester were examined on their translation and revision skills to test the assumption that good translators are also good revisers. These participants were all international students from mainland China. In the University of Queensland MA translation program, trainees (the enrolled students) in the second semester of the English-Chinese translation course were given six home translation tasks, two home revision tasks, five class translation tasks and one class revision task. For the home translation and revision tasks, students had plenty of time to check background information online, use dictionaries, discuss with their peers and perform self-revision after some "downtime" (i.e. the amount of time translators and trainees leave their translation aside before coming back to revise it). Students were allocated 1 hour 15 minutes on average for each class translation and 1 hour for each class revision task of around 250 English words. Students' scores were collected at the end of the semester and compared across the tasks. Correlation analyses were carried out to see whether good translator trainees also tend to perform better in the revision tasks.

In Stage 2, the research compared translations of two texts by the cohort of the July 2017 intake in their second semester (Group\_T, n=23), and revisions of the same texts by the February 2019 intake in their second semester (Group\_R, n=29). The two texts were entitled "Water Sources in Queensland" (adapted from Queensland Government, 2020) (WS\_T for translation and WS\_R for revision) and "Northern Territory Gives Secret Green Light to Sell Share of Darwin Port" (adapted from Aikman, 2016) (NT\_T for translation and NT\_R for revision). The translated texts to be revised are based on errors made by students from previous semesters. Considering both texts were Australia-specific, with the NT text particularly related to a news report, all the tasks were given as homework so that students had enough time to search for background information online. The person marking the tasks was the usual marker during every semester and was unaware of the research.

Two large categories of factors from the initial translation text were examined based on the interference categories in Hansen (2008): lexical and syntactical. Cultural interference as identified by Hansen (2008) was grouped here with lexical interference, as demarcation between the two at this stage is neither necessary nor the aim of the present research. Likewise, text-semantic errors were grouped together with syntactical interference. Comparative lexical and syntactical analyses were conducted across the groups.

In Stage 3, a semi-structured survey was conducted in which a questionnaire was distributed to Group\_R participants. The questions are detailed in the Appendix.

## **4. Results and discussion**

### ***4.1 Stage 1: a correlation study***

In Stage 1, the average of students' translation performance out of 50, including all the home translation tasks and class translation tasks, was compared with the average of their revision tasks. SPSS was used to calculate Pearson correlation



(2-tailed). There was a significant and positive relationship between students' translation average and revision average,  $r = .693$  ( $n=52$ ),  $p$  (2-tailed  $<.01$ ). The correlation is considered moderate generally and strong according to the guide suggested in Evans (1996). So, it is safe to say there is a moderately high correlation between the sample's translation performance and revision performance.

The participants were then sorted into three groups according to their translation scores – high (Group\_HT,  $n=17$ ), intermediate (Group\_IT,  $n=17$ ) and low (Group\_LT,  $n=18$ ) – in order to examine how translation performance correlates with revision performance in each proficiency group. It is found that for Group\_HT, the correlation between students' translation average and revision average is high and positive,  $r = .869$  ( $n=17$ ),  $p$  (2-tailed  $<.01$ ). There is a moderate and positive correlation for Group\_LT,  $r = .561$  ( $n=17$ ),  $p$  (2-tailed  $<.01$ ). However, no significant correlation is found for Group\_IT.

#### **4.2 Stage 2: lexical and syntactical interference analysis**

Stage 2 comprised two steps: the first step tested whether Group\_R and Group\_T were parallel and comparable. After that was confirmed, in the second step, Group\_T participants' performance in the two translation tasks was compared to Group\_R participants' performance in the two revision tasks.

First, Group\_R participants' scores in their final exam in Semester 1 were compared with those of Group\_T to see whether there was any difference between the two groups. An independent-samples  $t$ -test was conducted in SPSS to compare scores of the two groups. There was no significant difference in the scores of Group\_T ( $M=37.62$ ,  $SD=2.69$ ) and Group\_R ( $M=38.48$ ,  $SD=2.41$ );  $t(50)=-1.18$ ,  $p=0.242$ . The results suggest that participants in Group\_T and Group\_R are almost the same in terms of their translation performances and can be considered parallel groups in the study.

Next, contrastive lexical and syntactical analyses were conducted to single out difficult words, phrases and sentences where trainees tend to make mistakes in translation and revision in the two texts. These difficult phrases and sentences were used as the "test items" in comparing revisions by Group\_R with translations by Group\_T. The test items were categorised into two groups: the lexical ones and the syntactical ones.

Seven lexical translation errors in the revision tasks were selected as the lexical test items. The error types did not include incorrect use of Chinese characters, because although this is categorised under spelling errors by NAATI, the students did not seem to experience any difficulty in the present research (Group\_R participants effectively detected and corrected all incorrect Chinese characters). Performances of Group\_R and Group\_T were compared in terms of how the participants of each group treated the test items. Percentages of correct revisions by Group\_R and correct translation Group\_T of these seven items are illustrated in Figure 2.

Overall, it seems that the two groups encountered different levels of difficulty in dealing with the seven items. Group\_T performed remarkably better than Group\_R overall, with the exception of lexical Item\_L5 ('water sources'), where both groups tended to confuse it with 'water resources'. Interestingly, it was observed that Group\_R tended to ignore the errors in the revision tasks. For instance, in Item\_L1 ('\$506 million'), the dollar sign of the currency in the initial translation was not rendered<sup>3</sup> and only 71% of Group\_R participants detected it. Items\_L2 ('water carting'), L3 ('climate-resilient') and L4 ('local council') are technical terms that require online research, and it seems Group\_T was likely to do more online research for technical and special terms while Group\_R tended to agree with the initial translation. A substantial

---

<sup>3</sup> In Chinese texts, it is standard practice to express numerical units, be it money, distance, weight or temperature, with spelt-out words of the units rather than the abbreviations or symbols.

discrepancy was found between the two groups on Item\_L4 ('local council'). The trainees might not be familiar with the term due to different political systems in Australia and mainland China. Despite the fact that both groups were expected to do background research, only 28% of Group\_R participants in the revision task detected the mistranslation of the term 'city council' from English into 'parliament' (Chinese) in the initial translation and corrected it appropriately, contrasted by the 80% correct translation rate by Group\_T participants.

Both groups had great difficulty with Item\_L7 'water security' and tended to understand it as 'water safety'. This difficulty is mainly caused by the interference of the trainees' native language, Chinese, as the primary dictionary meanings of 'safety' and 'security' in Chinese are of the same written form but can be very different depending on context. Still, the number of correct responses for Group\_T is 11% higher than that for Group\_R. Item\_L6 ('a number of') also seems to have posed a considerable challenge to the trainees of Chinese background, probably because they are misled by the English-Chinese dictionary students commonly use, *Lu Gusun English-Chinese Dictionary*, where the meaning of 'a number of' is given as "a large number of". But surprisingly, the correct rate for Group\_T nearly doubled that of Group\_R.

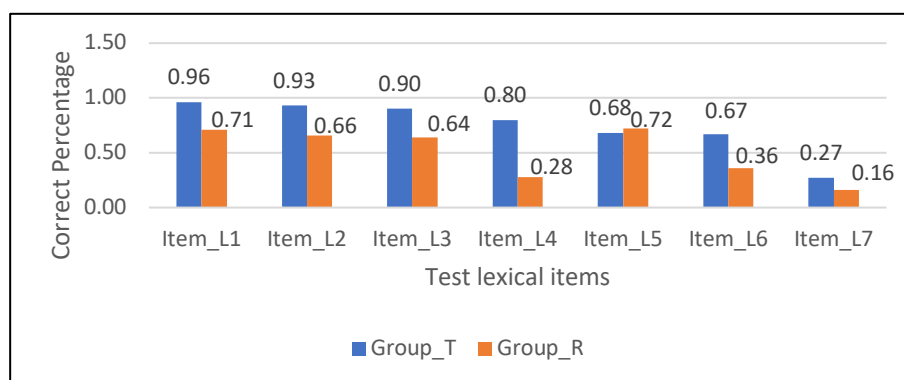


Figure 2. Comparing percentage of correct translation and revision in difficult lexical items

In the syntactic analysis, errors of omission and syntax by both groups were examined. Omission does not seem to be an issue for the trainees, as Group\_T did not omit any parts and all participants in Group\_R successfully identified and corrected the omitted parts. Five difficult sentences with Chinese syntactic errors in the revision text were selected as the test items, and performances of the two groups were compared.

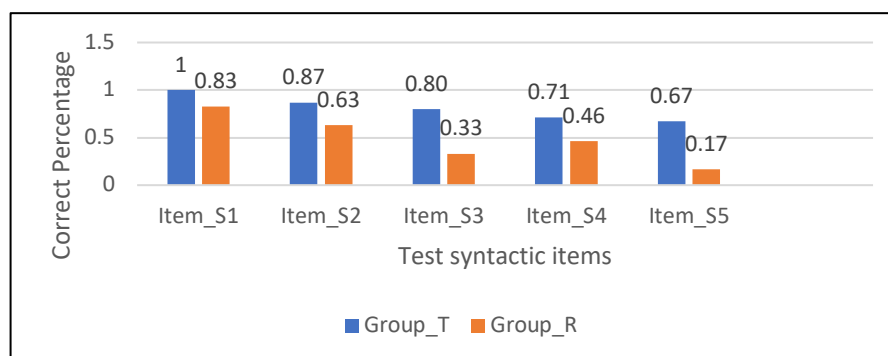


Figure 3. Comparing percentage of correct translation and revision in difficult syntactic items

Significant differences were found between them, as is illustrated in Figure 3. It was relatively easy for Group\_T participants to work out the syntactical structure of the sentences, with the correct rate ranging from 67% to 100% across the five test items. As a contrast, Group\_R participants' performances on the five test items were markedly poorer, particularly on Item\_S3 and Item\_S5 with a nearly 50% difference between the two groups. With a closer examination, it was found that Group\_R participants were likely to agree syntactically with the mis-rendered sentence structures in the initial translation, as a result of which the revision in general was not very successful. Item\_S3, for instance, which concerns how the pronoun 'it' refers to an antecedent (i.e. the noun that 'it' substitutes for), did not constitute a big challenge to Group\_T, as 80% of them identified the correct antecedent in their translation. By contrast, only 33% of Group\_R participants managed to detect this faulty reference in the revision texts, while all others agreed with the initial translation.

The distinction is further exemplified in Item\_S5 "(t)he current government is understood to have secretly agreed to the sale of its remaining 20 per cent stake in the Darwin Port before going into caretaker mode". The correct rate of Group\_R was as low as 17%, in contrast with 67% correct rate of Group\_T. This inconsistency may be due to the fact that the revision participants were affected negatively by the way the initial translation mistreated the word 'before', which was mistranslated into equivalents of *ran2hou4*<sup>4</sup> (then/next) in Chinese. In many instances indicating a smooth and natural process, 'before' can be translated as 'then' without making any changes to the English word order, as Chinese is a paratactic language following the word order of chronological sequence. However, in this particular instance, the adverbial of time in the Chinese translation must be put at the beginning of the Chinese translation to emphasise that the situation was a premeditated conspiracy. Over 80% of revision participants did not manage to identify the error, contrasted with the almost 70% of translation participants who did not seem to encounter much difficulty in determining the correct syntactic pattern.

To sum up, the results in Stage 2 suggest that Group\_R tends to be affected both lexically and syntactically by errors in the initial translation they are given. With the same texts used as translation tasks, Group\_T performs remarkably better with interference from the original translation being non-existent. This result confirms the hypothesis of the current research that trainees tend to perform better in their translation tasks than in the revision tasks where the initial translation is provided. This is contrary to previously discussed findings in Mossop (2014/2020) and Ipsen and Dam (2016), where the source text is considered a major interference, and in Robert and Van Waes (2014), where no interference from either source text or initial translation is reported. It also differs from ISO 17100, Horváth (2011) and Robin (2016) in terms of their recommended focus on the initial translation in other-revision. One possible cause of the discrepancies might be that the current research used trainees as subjects while the above-mentioned previous research studied professionals, who are expected to have a higher resistance to T1 interference.

In order to achieve improved research credibility and validity, Stage 3 of the research triangulates the findings in Stage 2 with a semi-structured survey.

### ***4.3 Stage 3: A survey of trainees' perceptions of translation revision***

A semi-structured survey of nine items was conducted at the end of the semester on reflections and perceptions of Group\_R participants (n=29) about English-Chinese translation revision. It was designed to investigate how revision trainees were affected by the initial Chinese translation lexically, syntactically and in other aspects. Item 1 is a closed question that asks how many years of

---

<sup>4</sup> The number at the end of a syllable in the official romanisation system of Chinese characters indicates the tone of every Chinese character.

experience they have had in revision and Item 9 is an open question inviting additional comments on revision. Item 3 is a semi-open question asking about their general revision procedures. All the other six items are closed-ended questions that require a single option, with “other” as one of the options. The “other” options are followed by “please specify \_\_\_\_\_” to enable participants to elaborate further.

Twenty-nine questionnaires (see Appendix) were distributed in class and the participants were allowed as much time as they needed. All of them finished their questionnaires in 20 minutes. All the 29 collected questionnaires were found to be valid. To 23 participants, not surprisingly, revision was a completely new task which did not start until Semester 1 of their study, according to their options in Item 1. In terms of the difficulty level of revision tasks compared to the translation tasks in the course (Item 2), 24 of them found the former more difficult than the latter while only five found the former easier. This significantly disproportionate result may be due to the participants’ insufficient exposure to revision tasks as well as the potential challenge from T1 interference.

The participants’ responses to Items 5 and 6 concerning whether they could easily detect wrong Chinese characters and omissions in the initial Chinese translation were also very consistent with their performances in the revision task: 27 and 28 respectively confirmed their capability in these aspects.

In regard to how the participants felt they were affected lexically and syntactically by the initial translation, they were comparatively less unanimous, but the pattern is very clear, as is indicated in Figure 4. Well over 60% of the responses to Item 4 about lexical impact and Item 7 about syntactic impact saw “the original translation being more interfering than helpful”, with two more people considering they were more likely to be influenced syntactically by the initial translation than lexically. Many fewer participants found the initial translation more helpful than interfering lexically (6 out of 29) and syntactically (4 out of 29). Only a few participants thought they were not affected by the initial Chinese translation: four lexically and three syntactically.

The significant interference from the initial translation is confirmed by the participants’ responses to Item 8. Twenty-one out of 29 participants think they could have done a better job in translating the same text without being provided with the initial translation, while only 3 participants think they would have done it worse if translating it in the first place.

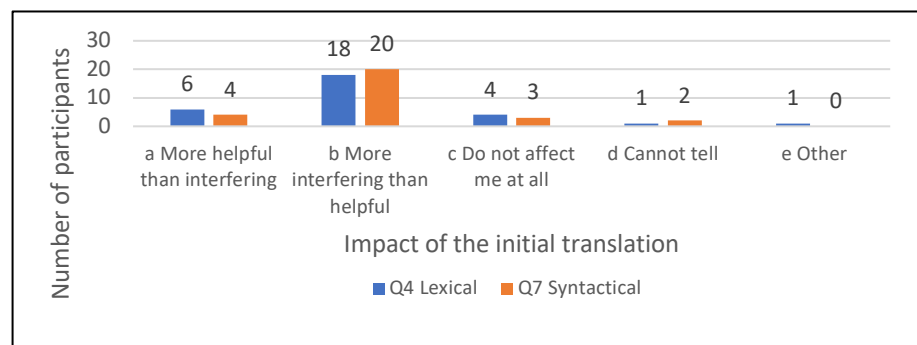


Figure 4. Impact of the initial translation on reviser trainees

Nine participants made additional comments on revision in responding to Item 9. One participant commented that revision requires “more advanced skills” and “more elaborate knowledge of Chinese” than translation. One wrote that they were “in need of more practice” and hoped to have the chance to “revise texts of other genres”. Six of them found the initial translation “distracting”, “restricting”, “misleading” or “annoying”, and they wished they could be

allowed the time to translate the text first and then do the revision based on their own translation. This attitude is understandable considering their frustrations in revision but could entail some risk. If trainees insist on doing translation foremost, they would be less likely to learn to handle T1 interference and might ultimately tend to over-revise in their professional practice. Over-revision is quite common in professional practice as revisers tend to make unnecessary and unjustified changes (Ko, 2011; Robin, 2016; Horváth, 2011). Trainees need to be aware of this and strive to avoid it in their professional careers.

## **5. Conclusion and methodological and pedagogical implications**

Translation revision is not a mainstream research topic in the field of translation studies, and it is under-investigated. In the translation industry, TSPs usually turn to highly skilled translators for revision tasks. In Australia, there is no compulsory revision policy and NAATI has only recently introduced a revision task in the certification examination as part of its testing reform. This research, based on the existing literature and the author's own observations during her teaching under the guidelines of NAATI's new testing system and marking rubrics, investigates the relationship between trainees' translation and revision skills, and how their revisions are impacted by the initial translation. It does so through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.

In order to answer the first research question, namely how trainees' revision performance relates to their translation performance and whether good translator trainees are necessarily good reviser trainees, a correlation study was carried out to investigate how the trainee participants' performance in their translation tasks compared with that in the revision tasks, as compared across all participants and within each of three proficiency groups. The present research used Chinese L1 trainees, with the L1 and L2 independent variables that must have impacted the results in Hansen (2008) removed to increase the research validity. The results suggest that good translator trainees tend to be also strong with revision and poor translator trainees tend to be also weak with revision. But no significant correlation is found for the intermediate group. It may be due to the small sample size. In future studies if the sample size for each efficiency group exceeds 30, a conclusion can be made with more confidence. It may also be that intermediate trainees are helped and at the same time strongly impacted by the initial translation when it comes to the revision tasks, such that their impact patterns are more unpredictable than those of stronger and weaker trainees. Further follow-up studies are needed to verify this. In order to answer the second research question, namely how trainees' revision performance is impacted by the initial translated text they are provided with, an analysis was conducted on how trainees were affected by the lexical and syntactic errors in the initial translation. The results were triangulated by a survey on the trainees' reflections. It can be concluded from the results that omission and incorrect Chinese characters do not constitute much, if any, challenge to trainees. This is probably because trainees are on high alert for these two types of errors due to previous training. They tend to find revision tasks more challenging than the translation tasks, and negative T1 interference is prevalent both lexically and syntactically. They are very likely to be distracted and misled by the initial translation. The hypothesis of the current research that reviser trainees are influenced by the initial translation is confirmed. They tend to be misled by lexical as well as syntactic errors in the initial translation. This finding is contradictory to some previous studies with professional translators which suggest that it is the source text that contributes major interference rather than the initial translation, which is accordingly where the focus of revision should be placed. This difference might be due to the supposition that professional practitioners are more resistant to T1 interference. This offers a foundation for

follow-up studies comparing trainees' anti-interference ability against that of the professionals. Additionally, it should be noted that the conclusion is based on the performances of trainees in English-LOTE revision tasks. In order to get a fuller picture of T1 interference, more studies are needed to look into how trainees are impacted in LOTE-English revision tasks.

The methodology and findings of this study have implications for translation researchers as well as educators. Methodologically, this study is one of the first few empirical studies on translation revision training to use triangulation of data collection and analysis. It is clear from the study that interference in translation revision is a very complex area of research involving multiple perspectives, which necessitates a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches employing multiple methods. The existing literature is mostly concerned with observations and assumptions about translation revision, with no investigation of training in translation revision. This study has proposed a triangulation approach for future empirical studies on revision trainees as well as revision professionals. Also, in future studies, translation proficiency level may be an important variable in investigating the size of interference effects. Trainees at different translation proficiency levels may be subject to different degrees of interference and may also address it differently. Last but not least, this study may provide some insights for future investigation of the revision process which, to the best knowledge of the author, has attracted only relatively modest research interest thus far.

Pedagogically, this research presents some insightful implications for reviser training, although there is still a long way to go before evidence in this research finds its way to application in the curricula. As Chinese-English reviser trainees are very cautious about omission errors and incorrect Chinese characters, training on this aspect requires little extra effort. By contrast, student revisers tend to be misled by lexical and syntactic errors in the initial translation. In order to avoid the negative impact of such errors, trainees express a preference for translating the text themselves first before performing revision. This is, however, neither practical nor cost-effective in reality, as the given turnaround for revision tasks by other revisers is usually shorter and payment lower than those for translation tasks (Graham, 2016; Künzli, 2007a, 2007b). It is suggested that bilingual comparative revision rather than unilingual revision should be conducted by trainees. Additionally, more efforts should be devoted to developing in them a higher awareness of the errors and a higher resistance to T1 interference.

## References

- Aikman, A. (2016, August 18). NT gives green light in secret deal for Chinese to sell share of Darwin Port. *The Australian*, 4.
- ASTM International (Subcommittee F43.03). (2014). *ASTM F 2575-14 Standard guide for quality assurance in translation*. [https://compass.astm.org/EDIT/html\\_annot.cgi?F2575+14](https://compass.astm.org/EDIT/html_annot.cgi?F2575+14)
- AUSIT. (2014). *Best practices: For the translation of official and legal documents*. [https://www.mediaelements.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/03/Best\\_Practices\\_2014.pdf](https://www.mediaelements.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/03/Best_Practices_2014.pdf)
- Brunette, L., Gagnon, C. & Hine J. (2005). The GREVIS project: revise or court calamity. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 6 (1), 29-45.
- Brunette, L. (2000). Towards a terminology for translation quality assessment: A comparison of TQA practices. *The Translator*, 6 (2), 169– 182.
- CGSB. (2008). CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008. *National standard of Canada: Translation services*. [https://www.techstreet.com/cgsb/standards/can-cgsb-131-10-2008?product\\_id=1579685](https://www.techstreet.com/cgsb/standards/can-cgsb-131-10-2008?product_id=1579685)

- CGSB. (2017). CAN/CGSB-131.10-2017. *National standard of Canada: Translation services*. [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/ongc-cgsb/P29-131-10-2017-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/ongc-cgsb/P29-131-10-2017-eng.pdf)
- DIN. (2006). *DIN EN 15038:2006-08. Translation services - Service requirements*. [https://www.password-europe.com/images/PWE/PDF/DIN\\_EN15038.pdf](https://www.password-europe.com/images/PWE/PDF/DIN_EN15038.pdf)
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2009). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Routledge.
- Evans, J. D. (1996). *Straightforward statistics for the behavioral sciences*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Graham, N. (2016, October 19). Revision survey results Part 2: Rates. *My Words for a Change*. <https://nikkigrahamtranix.com/2016/10/19/revision-survey-results-part-2>
- Hansen, G. (2008). The speck in your brother's eye – the beam in your own: Quality Management in Translation and Revision. In G. Hansen, A. Chesterman & H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast (Eds.), *Efforts and models in interpreting and translation research: A tribute to Daniel Gile* (pp. 255-280). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hansen, G. (2009). A classification of errors in translation and revision. In M. Forstner, H. Lee-Jahnke, & P. A. Schmitt (Eds.), *CIUTI-Forum 2008: Enhancing Translation Quality: Ways, Means, Methods* (pp. 313-326). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Horváth, P. I. (2011). *A szakfordítások lektorálása. Elmélet és gyakorlat* [Revising Specialised Translations. Theory and Practice]. Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó.
- Ipsen, A. H., & Dam, H. V. (2016). Translation revision: Correlating revision procedure and error detection. *HERMES-Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 55, 143-156.
- ISO. (2018). *EN ISO 17100:2015+A1:2017 Translation services. Requirements for translation services*. <https://www.en-standard.eu/bs-en-iso-17100-2015-a1-2017-translation-services-requirements-for-translation-services>
- Ko, L. (2011). Translation checking: A view from the translation market. *Perspectives*, 19(2), 123-134.
- Krings, H. (2001). *Repairing texts*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.
- Künzli, A. (2006a). Translation revision: A study of the performance of ten professional translators revising a technical text. In M. Gotti & S. Sarcevic (Eds.), *Insights into Specialised Translation* (pp. 193-211). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Künzli, A. (2006b). Teaching and learning translation revision: Some suggestions based on evidence from a think-aloud protocol study. In M. D. Garant (Ed.), *Current trends in translation teaching and learning* (pp. 9-24). Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- Künzli, A. (2007a). Translation revision - A study of the performance of ten professional translators revising a legal text. In Y. Gambier, M. Shlesinger & R. Stolze (Eds.), *Doubts and directions in translation studies* (pp. 115-126). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Künzli, A. (2007b). The ethical dimension of translation revision: An empirical study. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 2007(8), 42-56.
- Martin, T. (2007). Managing risks and resources: a down-to-earth view of revision. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 8, 57-63.
- Mossop, B. (2007). Empirical studies of revision: what we know and need to know. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 8, 5-20.
- Mossop, B. (2014/2020). *Revising and editing for translators*. Routledge.
- NAATI. (2020a). *Revision of a non-specialised translation: list of error categories for candidates (English into Simplified Chinese)*. [https://www.naati.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/List-of-Error-Categories\\_Chinese-Simplified.pdf](https://www.naati.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/List-of-Error-Categories_Chinese-Simplified.pdf)
- NAATI. (2020b). *Certified translator test assessment rubrics*. <https://www.naati.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Certified-Translator-Assessment-Rubrics.pdf>
- Peña Polliastri, A. P. (2009). Evaluation criteria for the improvement of translation quality. In M. Forstner, H. Lee-Jahnke, & P. A. Schmitt (Eds.), *CIUTI-Forum 2008: Enhancing translation quality: ways, means, methods* (pp. 239-261). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Queensland Government. (2020). Water sources in Queensland. *Water Supply Planning*. <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/mining-energy-water/water/industry-infrastructure/supply-planning/sources-queensland>

- Rasmussen, K. W., & Schjoldager, A. (2011). Revising translations: A survey of revision policies in Danish translation companies. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 15, 87-120.
- Robert, I. S. (2008). Translation revision procedures: An explorative study. In P. Boulogne (Ed.), *Translation and its others. Selected papers of the CETRA research seminar in translation studies 2007* (pp. 1-25). Leuven: CETRA-papers. <http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/papers/files/robert.pdf>
- Robert, I. S. (2012). *La révision en traduction: les procédures de révision et leur impact sur le produit et le processus de révision* [Translation revision: revision procedures and their impact on revision product and process]. Antwerpen: Universiteit Antwerpen.
- Robert, I. S. (2014). Investigating the problem-solving strategies of revisers through triangulation: An exploratory study. *Translation and Interpreting Studies. The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, 9(1), 88-108.
- Robert, I. S., Remael, A., & Ureel, J. J. (2017). Towards a model of translation revision competence. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 11(1), 1-19.
- Robert, I. S., & Van Waes, L. (2014). Selecting a translation revision procedure: do common sense and statistics agree? *Perspectives*, 22(3), 304-320.
- Robin, E. (2016). The Translator as Reviser. In I. Horváth (Ed.), *The Modern Translator and Interpreter* (pp. 45-56). Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.
- Shih, C. Y. Y. (2006). Revision from translators' point of view: An interview study. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, 18(2), 295-312.
- Uotila, A. (2017). *Revision and quality assurance in professional translation: a study of revision policies in Finnish translation companies* (Master's thesis). Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Van Rensburg, A. (2017). Developing assessment instruments: The effect of a reviser's profile on the quality of the revision product. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, 16, 71-88.

## Appendix

### Questionnaire

Please circle the answers that fit your situation most. You can use EITHER ENGLISH OR CHINESE in answering the questions.

1. When was your first experience with translation revision? Please circle ONE answer only.
  - a. five years ago
  - b. two years ago
  - c. one year ago
  - d. Less than a year ago (started in Semester 1)
  
2. In terms of difficulty level, how do you find the revision tasks in this course in general compared with the translation tasks in general? Please circle ONE answer only.
  - a. More difficult than the translation tasks.
  - b. Easier than the translation tasks.
  - c. As difficult as the translation tasks.
  - d. I cannot tell.
  - e. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How do you work on the revision tasks? Please specify the reasons. Please circle ONE answer only.
  - a. I read the entire English original text first and then the Chinese translation, because \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. I read the entire Chinese translation first and then the English original text, because \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. I read one English section first and the corresponding Chinese translation, and then I move on to the next section because \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Other, please specify how and why \_\_\_\_\_



4. In the process of revision, how does the initial translation affect you in terms of understanding difficult words/terms/expressions? Please circle ONE answer only.
- The initial translations of the terms are more helpful than interfering to me.
  - The initial translations of the terms are more interfering than helpful to me.
  - The initial translations of the terms do not affect me at all.
  - I cannot tell how the initial translations of the terms affect me.
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. In the process of revision, how do the wrong Chinese characters in the initial translation affect you? Please circle ONE answer only.
- In more cases than not, I could identify the wrong Chinese characters in the initial translation.
  - In most instances, I could not identify the wrong Chinese characters in the initial translation.
  - I cannot tell how the wrong Chinese characters in the initial translation affect me.
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
6. In the process of revision, how do omissions in the initial translation affect you? Please circle ONE answer only.
- In more cases than not, I could identify the omissions in the initial translation.
  - In most instances, I could not identify the omissions in the initial translations.
  - I cannot tell how omissions in the initial translation affect me.
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
7. In the process of revision, how does the initial translation affect you in terms of sentence patterns? Please circle ONE answer only.
- The sentence patterns in the initial translation are more helpful than interfering to me.
  - The sentence patterns in the initial translation are more interfering than helpful to me.
  - The sentence patterns in the initial translation do not affect me at all.
  - I cannot tell how the sentence patterns in the initial translation affect me.
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
8. If you had been asked to translate instead of revising the same texts, you would have: (Please circle ONE answer only)
- done a better job in translating without the initial translation than with the initial translation.
  - done a worse job in translation without the initial translation than with the initial translation.
  - I cannot tell.
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
9. Other comments about revision:
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.