

Developing Genre Awareness and Translation Decision-Making Through a Collaborative Translation Project

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This study examines how undergraduate students in Taiwan engaged in a collaborative project in an introductory translation course. The task required them to collect, translate, revise, and format institutional content from multiple sources into a cohesive bilingual (Chinese–English) program specification. Drawing on qualitative analysis of group reflection logs, final drafts, and individual reflective essays, the study explores how students developed genre awareness and translation decision-making competencies over six weeks. Findings show that students’ genre awareness progressed from content focus through scaffolded adoption of conventions toward purposeful document design. Their translation decision-making evolved from lexical problem-solving through consultation of multiple sources to metacognitive quality assessment. Students also engaged with Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools through varied initial approaches, expanding to diverse applications and developing awareness of AI output limitations. The chronological development patterns observed across all competency areas demonstrate how professional skills emerge through sustained engagement with authentic challenges. The study underscores the value of integrating project-based, collaborative translation tasks into translator education, supporting pedagogical approaches that allow multiple competencies to develop simultaneously through hands-on practice with institutional genres and emerging technologies.

Keywords: genre awareness, translation decision-making, institutional translation, project-based learning, AI tool use

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培養體裁意識與翻譯決策能力： 以協作翻譯專案為例

葉純純

本研究探討臺灣大學生在入門翻譯課程中執行協作翻譯專案的歷程。該專案要求學生從校系網頁蒐集資料，進行翻譯、修訂與格式編排，以整合為一份連貫的中英雙語系課程說明文件。研究採取質性分析方法，資料來源包括小組反思週誌、專案成品與個人反思文章，旨在分析學生如何在六週專案期間發展體裁意識與翻譯決策能力。研究發現，在體裁意識方面，學生一開始只專注於內容，但在教學鷹架的支持下習得體裁慣例，最終能夠進行具目的性的文件設計。在翻譯決策方面，學生從詞彙層次的問題解決，發展為參照多元資源，進而具備後設認知的品質評估能力。在人工智慧（Artificial Intelligence, AI）工具使用上，學生初期採用不同方法，隨後擴展應用範圍，並發展出對 AI 產出侷限的認識。從各項能力的時間發展模式可見，專業技能是透過較長時間參與真實任務而培養出來的。本研究凸顯將專案導向的協作翻譯任務融入翻譯教學的價值，有助於學生在機構翻譯和新興技術的實作中同時培養各項專業能力。

關鍵詞：體裁意識、翻譯決策、機構翻譯、專案導向學習、AI 工具應用

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Introduction

In recent years, translation pedagogy has increasingly emphasized the importance of contextualized, purpose-driven tasks that reflect the complexity of real-world translation (Calvo, 2015; González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016; Kiraly, 2015). This shift has led to greater interest in how novice translators engage with institutional genres—documents such as program specifications, syllabi, and handbooks that require not only linguistic competence but also awareness of layout, tone, and audience expectations (House, 2015; Schäffner, 2004; Tsai, 2024). While classroom translation tasks have traditionally focused on sentence-level equivalence or general text types, there is growing recognition that students benefit from tasks situated in professional discourse settings, where they must navigate institutional norms, genre-specific structures, and the rhetorical demands of multilingual or cross-cultural contexts (Kiraly, 2005, 2015; Risku, 2002, 2016).

At the same time, genre-based perspectives drawn from second language writing and translation studies have offered valuable frameworks for understanding how students learn to produce texts that conform to institutional conventions. Genre is now widely viewed as more than a set of formal features; it is a socially situated and communicative response to audience, purpose, and disciplinary context (Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2009). In institutional translation, genre awareness involves more than transferring meaning—it requires rhetorical judgment about tone, formatting, sequencing, and voice in the target language. These decisions become especially salient in bilingual or administrative contexts, where translated documents must align with institutional identity while remaining intelligible to external audiences (Tsai, 2024).

Simultaneously, the integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into translation workflows has introduced new pedagogical considerations. Rather

than replacing human translators, these technologies may function as mediating tools that require users to make deliberate decisions about translation choices, audience needs, and genre conventions (Prieto Ramos, 2024; Sahari et al., 2023). However, limited research exists on how students navigate AI-assisted translation within authentic institutional contexts, particularly when working collaboratively on genre-specific documents.

This paper reports on an exploratory qualitative case study that investigated how undergraduate students in Taiwan engaged with these intersecting challenges through a collaborative bilingual program specification project. Drawing on qualitative analysis of group reflections, individual essays, and final bilingual drafts, this study examines how students developed genre awareness and translation decision-making competencies over a six-week project period, providing practical guidance for instructors seeking to integrate similar authentic tasks into translator education curricula. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: What patterns of genre awareness development and translation decision-making emerge when students collaboratively produce bilingual program specifications with AI-assisted support?

Literature Review

This study draws on three interconnected strands of scholarship relevant to translator education: translation as situated practice, genre awareness and pedagogical scaffolding, and the pedagogical integration of AI tools in translation pedagogy. While these areas have typically been examined separately, this study explores their intersection in collaborative institutional translation contexts.

Translation as Situated Communicative Practice

Translation is now widely understood as more than linguistic equivalence—it is a context-sensitive act shaped by communicative function, institutional norms, and reader expectations (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016; House, 2015). House (2015) conceptualizes translation as an act situated within a specific communicative context, in which target-language choices must align with purpose, audience, and setting. Similarly, González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído (2016) describe situated learning as exposing students to real-life or simulated translation tasks shaped by contextual factors such as institutional practices, cultural expectations, and social conventions. In this view, effective translation entails not only fidelity to source content but also pragmatic and rhetorical appropriateness. Schäffner (2004) likewise emphasizes that in institutional settings, translators must attend to tone, clarity, and discourse conventions, which may require adaptation rather than direct substitution.

This functional orientation is particularly relevant in academic or administrative contexts, where translation involves rearticulating culturally embedded meanings and formal structures for external or multilingual audiences (Tsai, 2024). In such institutional settings, translators act as mediators—not only between languages, but also between organizational expectations, disciplinary discourse, and the informational needs of diverse audiences (Kusssmaul, 1995; Pym, 2023). Such mediating roles require genre awareness, as translators must understand not only communicative context but also the textual conventions that signal institutional authority and accessibility to diverse audiences.

Genre Awareness and Pedagogical Scaffolding in Translator Education

Building on the notion of translation as a socially situated activity, genre-

based approaches offer a complementary perspective for understanding how translators learn to produce context-appropriate texts. Genre-based pedagogy views texts not as neutral containers of meaning, but as patterned rhetorical responses to communicative demands (Hyland, 2004). In translation contexts, genre awareness involves recognizing both structural conventions and rhetorical style appropriate to specific text types and communicative purposes (Askehave & Swales, 2001; Flowerdew, 2002). Structural conventions encompass organizational patterns, formatting requirements, and visual presentation standards, while rhetorical style involves register, tone, voice and persuasive strategies suited to particular audiences and institutional contexts (Hyland, 2004). For institutional documents, genre awareness becomes particularly complex as translators must navigate cross-cultural differences in discourse expectations while maintaining institutional authority and accessibility (Bhatia, 2004).

To help students internalize these patterns, pedagogical models emphasize scaffolded engagement with genre-specific features through strategies such as modeled input, guided production, and reflection on authentic tasks (Tardy, 2009). Risku (2002) and Kiraly (2015) further argue that genre-sensitive translation competence develops most effectively through tasks embedded in real-world environments. In such contexts, genre awareness includes decisions about formatting, sequencing, and rhetorical appropriateness—especially in genres with standardized yet adaptable structural expectations.

To translate these principles into classroom practice, collaborative, project-based learning environments have proven particularly effective. Kiraly (1995, 2000, 2005) and González-Davies (2004) advocate for collaborative, contextualized tasks that place students in active roles as meaning-makers. In these settings, genre knowledge is not transmitted directly but emerges through interaction, guided practice, and reflective decision-making. Genre awareness in translation pedagogy

thus entails recognizing communicative expectations, reproducing relevant conventions, and adjusting structural and stylistic features to target genre norms.

Scaffolding remains essential in this process (Calvo, 2015). Specifically, it helps bridge the gap between learners' current abilities and the complex demands of authentic translation tasks, especially when students navigate new or unfamiliar genre conventions. As novice translators often begin by prioritizing source-text fidelity but gradually move toward more audience- and context-sensitive adaptations (Munday et al., 2022), instructional supports play a key role in fostering this transition. In a cross-case review of authentic translation projects, Li (2022) highlights the importance of instructor guidance and modeling as students confront unfamiliar genre conventions. Sample texts, feedback cycles, and formatting checklists all help learners move from reactive imitation to more intentional genre use. These insights inform the present study's attention to how various forms of scaffolding shaped students' genre awareness during the collaborative production of a bilingual institutional document.

AI Tools in Contemporary Translation Pedagogy

Building on situated and genre-aware approaches to translation pedagogy, the emergence of AI tools such as machine translation and ChatGPT introduces new considerations for translator education (Sánchez-Castany, 2023). Rather than treating AI as a threat to human agency, recent research suggests that these tools can support learning when used critically and reflectively (Sahari et al., 2023). Achieving this critical and reflective use, however, necessitates specific skills and a refined understanding of translator competence. Thus, Prieto Ramos (2024) argues for an updated model of translator competence that includes revision skills, strategic decision-making, and tool evaluation—especially in high-stakes domains like legal and institutional translation.

Pedagogically, task-based studies show that AI use can prompt greater awareness of translation processes. Öner Bulut and Alimen (2023), for example, found that students who engaged in machine translation post-editing and collaborative reflection developed a clearer sense of their role as human mediators. Similarly, Zou et al. (2026) demonstrate that AI tools can enhance student interpreters' ability to summarize and clarify dense texts, supporting both accuracy and confidence.

These findings suggest that AI tools may support translation learning when integrated into structured tasks and accompanied by guided reflection, similar to the scaffolded approaches discussed in genre-based pedagogy. While more empirical research is needed on AI use in authentic translation settings, current studies highlight the importance of prompting students to evaluate, revise, and justify their use of generative tools. This perspective informs the present study's exploration of how students used generative AI tools to support phrasing, restructuring, and synthesis during a genre-informed translation project.

Together, these strands of research demonstrate how contextual awareness, genre familiarity, and critical tool use intersect in translator education. Situated translation practice provides the foundation for understanding communicative purpose; genre-based pedagogy offers frameworks for recognizing and reproducing textual conventions; and AI integration requires students to apply both contextual and genre knowledge when evaluating digital output. While previous studies have examined these areas separately, limited research has explored their intersection in collaborative institutional translation contexts. This exploratory case study addresses this gap by examining observable patterns of genre awareness development and translation decision-making during collaborative production of bilingual institutional documents.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative case study approach (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) to examine patterns of genre awareness development and translation decision-making in a collaborative, AI-mediated institutional translation project. Case study methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating complex pedagogical phenomena where context cannot be separated from the learning processes under investigation (Duff, 2008). Rather than seeking statistical generalizability, this approach aims to provide rich, contextualized understanding of how students navigate authentic translation challenges within specific instructional conditions.

The case study design follows what Stake (1995) terms an intrinsic case study, focusing on understanding this particular instance of collaborative translation pedagogy for its own merit rather than to illustrate broader theoretical principles. The bounded nature of the case—one six-week project within a single course—allows for detailed examination of learning processes over time while acknowledging the inherent limitations of single-context research.

The case examined in this study was a six-week bilingual program specification project embedded in an undergraduate English–Chinese translation course. Students worked in groups to collect, translate, revise, and compile departmental information from the university website into a cohesive bilingual booklet. Some materials were available only in Chinese, some only in English, and some already bilingual, requiring students to identify gaps, translate where needed, harmonize existing bilingual materials, and format the final product. The task was designed to simulate the kinds of loosely structured, document-based translation

tasks often encountered in institutional settings—where source materials may be incomplete, unevenly detailed, or inconsistently formatted.

Participants and Course Context

Participants were 13 undergraduate students (six male, seven female; mean age = 21.3 years) enrolled in an elective English–Chinese translation course at a national university in Taiwan. Twelve participants were English majors, and one was from a different department. In terms of year level, five students were seniors, five were juniors, and three were in their second year. All participants were native speakers of Chinese. Their English proficiency levels varied, ranging from CEFR B1 to B2, an estimation based on classroom observation and their performance on course-related assessments—an admittedly imprecise measure reflecting the practical constraints of classroom-based research.

All students had some prior experience with English academic writing, but none had formal training in professional translation. Participants were recruited via an in-class announcement, and participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained prior to data collection. The dual role of instructor-researcher was disclosed to participants, with emphasis that research participation would not affect course grades.

Earlier in the semester, students completed scaffolded translation exercises involving short informative and expressive text types, with attention to cross-linguistic contrasts in grammar, meaning, and rhetorical style. These tasks emphasized accuracy, tone, and contextual adaptation, building foundational skills in genre sensitivity and strategic decision-making that supported their engagement with the more complex, collaborative project.

Project Task and Timeline

The bilingual program specification project was designed to provide students with authentic motivation as they would be creating materials potentially useful for their own department. The project was implemented in the final six weeks of the semester (Weeks 11–16), with Weeks 11–15 devoted to collaborative development and Week 16 designated for final submission. Class time allocation varied by week but averaged approximately 100 minutes.

Students were divided into three groups: two groups of four students each and one group of five members. Grouping was self-selected by students rather than strategically organized by the instructor, reflecting typical classroom conditions where students with mixed English proficiency levels work together. This meant that groups varied not only in their collective ability to evaluate AI-generated content, but also in their overall translation capabilities, genre awareness development, and collaborative decision-making processes. We acknowledge that these proficiency differences may have affected multiple aspects of the project, including students' ability to identify translation problems, recognize genre conventions, and contribute to group discussions about translation choices.

In Week 11, students were introduced to the task and provided with several sample program specifications in English to familiarize them with the expected structure and tone. Because formal program specifications in Chinese were not readily available, two similar institutional documents—a graduate handbook and an undergraduate curriculum structure guide—were also shared. Together, these materials served as sample documents offering reference points for structure, tone, and genre expectations.

In subsequent weeks, students collected and selected relevant content from the department website, determined which sections required translation or rewriting,

and began drafting. By Week 13, most groups had established a content structure and divided responsibilities among members. Week 14 was devoted to cross-group peer review, during which groups exchanged drafts and provided feedback. In Week 15, each group gave a short in-class presentation, sharing their in-progress drafts and reflecting on key translation and writing decisions. These interactions offered students opportunities to observe and compare approaches to structure, tone, and layout.

Throughout the project, the instructor provided targeted scaffolding in response to student needs. Sample documents included English-language program specifications from comparable departments, which demonstrated standard organizational features (educational objectives, faculty profiles, course descriptions), formal academic register, and conventional structural elements (tables of contents, standardized headings), supplemented by two related Chinese institutional texts (a graduate handbook and curriculum guide) that illustrated parallel organizational patterns and institutional voice conventions. When a question arose about the appropriate use of institutional voice (e.g., “we” vs. “the Department”), the instructor introduced a concise style guide covering specific recommendations such as third-person institutional phrasing (“the Department offers” rather than “we offer”), formal tone maintenance, and avoidance of promotional language (“comprehensive curriculum” rather than “excellent program”). Near the end of the project, a formatting checklist was distributed specifying requirements such as title page layout, automated table of contents generation, consistent heading hierarchies (14pt bold for major sections, 12pt bold for subsections), professional font usage, and appropriate image integration. These supports helped students align their drafts with academic and institutional norms while leaving room for group negotiation and judgment.

Data Collection

This study drew on three primary sources of data: group reflection logs, student writing, and individual reflective essays. The self-reported data (group reflection logs and individual essays) required careful interpretation and triangulation with textual evidence from student work.

- Group reflection logs: Each group submitted five weekly reflections (15 in total), responding to guided prompts about translation and writing decisions, challenges encountered, AI use, and emerging genre awareness. These logs provided longitudinal insight into students' evolving thinking and collaborative practices over time, though they may reflect idealized accounts of learning rather than complete records of actual processes. In-text citations follow the format (Reflection Log, G2 W14), referring to Group 2's Week 14 entry.
- Outlines and final drafts of the bilingual program specification: Each group submitted a draft outline in Week 12 and two separate final documents—one in Chinese and one in English—at the end of the project. These materials were used to analyze how students structured content, sequenced information, and responded to genre and audience expectations across both languages. In-text references to the drafts use the format (Final Draft, G1-EN) for the English version and (Final Draft, G3-CH) for the Chinese version.
- Individual reflective essays: At the end of the project, each student submitted a reflective essay discussing their translation strategies, collaboration experiences, genre awareness, and AI use. These reflections offered personal perspectives that complemented group-level data, though they are subject to the same potential bias as other self-reported sources. Citations follow the format (Reflective Essay, S9), where "S9" refers to Student 9.

In addition, two types of supplementary data were collected to provide background and contextual understanding. These included instructional scaffolding materials (e.g., sample documents, a formatting checklist, and a style guide) and the instructor's observation notes taken during in-class group work. While these materials were not systematically coded or cited, they informed the researcher's interpretation of student decision-making and project development.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify recurring patterns in students' reflections, translation strategies, and genre-related decisions. Group reflection logs and individual reflective essays were first coded for themes such as genre awareness development, collaborative negotiation, use of AI tools, and formatting or structural revisions. Codes were refined through iterative comparison across time points, groups, and data types, with attention to both individual voices and group-level dynamics.

Outlines and final drafts were analyzed to triangulate students' reported reflections with textual evidence. Special attention was paid to document structure, sequencing, tone, and formatting features across both Chinese and English versions. Observational field notes and instructional materials were consulted as supplementary sources to contextualize group decisions and instructional responses.

To enhance trustworthiness, several measures were implemented throughout the analysis process. Triangulation was achieved by cross-checking findings across multiple data sources (reflection logs, final documents, individual essays) and participant levels (individual, group, cross-group patterns). Coding and theme refinement were conducted with attention to internal consistency and credibility. Analytic memos were used throughout to document interpretive decisions and

support reflexive engagement during coding and theme development (Saldaña, 2015). A colleague with translation studies expertise independently coded 20% of the reflection logs to establish inter-rater reliability, with initial agreement of 78% improving to 92% after discussion and code refinement.

The analysis acknowledges that observed patterns may reflect factors beyond the pedagogical intervention, including students' prior experiences, individual motivation levels, and group dynamics. The study's contribution lies in documenting how these complex factors intersected within one specific implementation of collaborative translation pedagogy.

Findings

This section presents findings organized around the two primary phenomena identified in the research question: students' developing genre awareness and their evolving approach to translation decision-making, followed by their reported use of AI tools. Each subsection follows a chronological structure tracing students' development from early project stages (Weeks 11–12) through final reflections (Week 15), drawing on multiple data sources to track these developmental patterns.

Developing Genre Awareness Through Scaffolded Engagement

Evidence from student writing and weekly group reflections reveals a progression in genre awareness from initial content focus to more deliberate attention to structural conventions and institutional appropriateness. This development occurred in response to scaffolding materials introduced at different project stages and was most evident in students' evolving approach to document formatting, tone, and rhetorical positioning.

Initial Focus on Content Collection and Organization (Weeks 11–12)

In the early stages of the project, all three groups focused primarily on content collection and basic organization. The Week 12 outlines show that groups had identified major sections such as educational objectives, faculty information, graduation requirements, and course descriptions, but lacked attention to document presentation features. None of the initial outlines included title pages, tables of contents, or standardized heading hierarchies—formal presentation elements that students would later adopt.

Group 1's early reflection noted that they were “still figuring out how to organize everything we collected from the website” (Reflection Log, G1 W12), indicating that their primary concern was content arrangement rather than genre-appropriate presentation. Similarly, Group 2 focused on “deciding which courses to include and how to explain the requirements” without discussing document formatting or visual design (Reflection Log, G2 W12). These early reflections suggest that students initially conceptualized the task as information compilation rather than genre-specific document production.

Adopting Structural Conventions Through Modeled Input (Week 13)

Students' exposure to sample program specifications and institutional documents in Week 11 began to influence their structural decisions by Week 13. All three groups reported using these models to guide section organization and terminology choices. Group 2 noted replacing “Teaching Objectives” with “Educational Objectives” to align with language found in the sample documents (Reflection Log, G2 W13), indicating that they had begun to recognize that genre conventions extended beyond content to include specific terminology patterns.

Group 1 reflected that the sample documents helped them recognize the importance of consistent section labeling and alignment, prompting them to revise

headings and reorder subsections for better coherence (Reflection Log, G1 W13). This suggests that students moved from viewing samples as content examples to recognizing them as structural templates that embodied genre expectations.

However, students' adoption of conventions at this stage remained largely imitative. Their reflections focused on matching sample features rather than understanding the communicative functions these features served—indicating surface-level genre awareness without deeper rhetorical understanding.

Developing Institutional Voice and Tone Awareness (Weeks 13–14)

The introduction of the instructor's style guide in Week 13 prompted more substantive genre-related revisions, particularly regarding institutional voice and register. All three groups reported using the guide's recommendations about third-person institutional phrasing and formal tone to revise their drafts. Group 3 changed "we offer courses in translation and literature" to "the Department offers..." to match institutional voice conventions (Reflection Log, G3 W13). Group 2 removed promotional language like "excellent" and "outstanding" from their program overview, noting that such terms sounded "too promotional" for an institutional document (Reflection Log, G2 W14). These revisions suggest that students developed awareness that genre conventions encompass not only structural elements but also appropriate register and voice. Their reflections indicate growing recognition that institutional documents require specific rhetorical positioning—formal, objective, and authoritative rather than personal or promotional.

Students also demonstrated extended application of style guide principles beyond the specific examples provided. Group 1 revised a sentence that initially read "This course is great for students who..." to "This course provides opportunities for students to..." after internal discussion about whether the original phrasing was "too casual" for their target document (Reflection Log, G1 W14).

This broader application of tone principles suggests that students had begun to internalize institutional voice expectations and apply them to new contexts.

Applying Genre Conventions With Growing Understanding (Weeks 14–15)

By Week 14, students demonstrated more systematic attention to document presentation. The introduction of the formatting checklist prompted all groups to add title pages, generate automated tables of contents, and standardize heading hierarchies. Students also began making deliberate design choices to enhance readability. Group 1 noted inserting horizontal lines between course descriptions to “reduce visual clutter” and improve readability (Reflection Log, G1 W13), while Group 3 adjusted heading levels and font sizes to “ensure consistency across sections” (Reflection Log, G3 W14). These decisions suggest that students recognized formatting as serving communicative purposes—enhancing accessibility and professional presentation rather than simply meeting assignment requirements.

In final reflections, students demonstrated metacognitive awareness of their genre learning. Group 1 noted that they had learned to “select language based on our target audience” (Reflection Log, G1 W15), while Group 3 recognized the ongoing challenge of balancing “official document and something for promotion” (Reflection Log, G3 W15). This sophisticated recognition of genre tensions—acknowledging that institutional documents must be both informative and appealing—indicates that students had moved beyond rule-following to understanding genre as contextually negotiated communicative practice. Group 3’s additional reflection about focusing on “conciseness, preciseness, and layout design” and their effort “to make it more pleasant to read” (Reflection Log, G3 W15) further demonstrates their understanding of document design as serving reader needs rather than merely conforming to conventions.

Summary

Students' genre awareness developed from initial content focus through scaffolded exposure to conventions toward more purposeful document design. While early work prioritized information collection and organization, later reflections demonstrate recognition of genre as encompassing structural conventions, institutional voice, and reader-oriented presentation. The progression from imitative use of samples to broader application of style principles suggests that students began to understand genre conventions as functional rhetorical choices rather than arbitrary formatting requirements.

Students' Evolving Translation Decision-Making Practices

Students' reflections reveal a developmental progression in how they conceptualized and articulated translation challenges. Early in the project (Weeks 12–13), their concerns focused primarily on lexical accuracy and finding equivalent terms. By the project's conclusion (Week 15), their reflections demonstrated awareness of more complex rhetorical and contextual considerations.

Initial Focus on Lexical Challenges (Weeks 12–13)

In early reflection logs, all three groups primarily approached translation as word-level problem-solving. Group 1 devoted considerable attention to rendering culturally embedded expressions like *shizi jianquan*, *zhenrong jianqiang* 師資健全、陣容堅強 (well-qualified faculty, strong team lineup), explaining that these parallel four-character expressions commonly used in Chinese to create rhythm and emphasize positivity posed difficulty because they “sounded too flowery” in English academic documents (Reflection Log, G1 W12). Their solution—“Distinguished and Comprehensive Faculty”—reflected an emerging awareness that direct translation might not serve institutional purposes, though their

articulation remained focused on avoiding inappropriate tone rather than achieving specific rhetorical effects.

Group 2 similarly concentrated on individual lexical items, deliberating extensively over the verb *peiyu* 培育 (to cultivate or nurture) and weighing options such as “cultivate,” “develop,” and “aim to train.” Their eventual choice of “aim to train” was justified in terms of matching “goal-oriented tone used in English program materials” (Reflection Log, G2 W13), indicating growing awareness of how lexical choices function within specific genre contexts. These early reflections suggest that students initially conceptualized translation challenges primarily in terms of finding appropriate word-level equivalents, with emerging but limited awareness of genre-specific rhetorical demands.

Consulting Multiple Sources for Translation Decisions (Week 14)

By Week 14, students’ reflections revealed that they had begun consulting various external sources to inform their translation choices rather than relying solely on their individual linguistic knowledge. Two of three groups reported consulting institutional sources—department websites, course syllabi, and Ministry of Education glossaries—to verify terminology and assess appropriateness (Reflection Logs, G1 W14; G2 W14). Group 2 described revising their translation of *biye menkan* 畢業門檻 (graduation requirement) after checking how the term was rendered on their department’s English webpage, indicating that they had begun to view institutional discourse as an authoritative reference for translation decisions (Reflection Log, G2 W14).

Group 1 reflected on their deliberative process for rendering “program specification” into Chinese, comparing terms like *guizhang* 規章 (regulations), *shouce* 手冊 (handbook), and *peiyang fangan* 培養方案 (training plan) before selecting *guizhang* based on its perceived formality and alignment with university

website terminology (Reflection Log, G1 W13). While their final choice may not have been optimal—*guizhang* typically refers to rules or administrative regulations rather than curriculum documents—their decision-making process revealed consultation of institutional sources to guide translation choices.

Students also expanded their sources to include peer input through both internal group discussions and cross-group review activities. Group 2, for example, changed “Career Path” to “Post-Graduation Pathways” after internal group discussion, considering the new term more precise. The same group also adopted “Digital Literacy” over “Information Literacy” for *zixun nengli kecheng* 資訊能力課程 (information skills course), following suggestions received during peer review activities (Reflection Log, G2 W14). These examples illustrate that students had begun to view collaborative feedback as another valuable source for informing translation decisions.

This shift toward consulting multiple sources—institutional references, existing translations, and peer input—represents a notable change from students’ earlier reliance on individual lexical knowledge. Rather than making translation decisions in isolation, students developed practices of seeking external validation and guidance, suggesting that they recognized translation as requiring broader contextual knowledge than individual linguistic competence alone.

Metacognitive Assessment of Translation Quality (Week 15)

In final reflections, students demonstrated capacity for retrospective quality assessment using criteria that extended beyond accuracy. Group 2 evaluated that their “translations were fluent and accurately conveyed the original meaning” (Reflection Log, G2 W15), indicating that they had developed standards for assessing translation adequacy that encompassed both accuracy and fluency. Group 1 reflected that they had learned to “select language based on our target audience”

(Reflection Log, G1 W15), suggesting that audience consideration had become a conscious strategic element rather than an intuitive adjustment. These reflections indicate that by project's end, students could articulate translation decision-making in terms of quality standards and strategic choices—a substantial shift from the primarily lexical concerns that characterized their early reflections.

Summary

Students' reflections reveal a developmental progression from word-focused problem-solving toward more contextually informed translation awareness. While early concerns centered on finding appropriate equivalents, later reflections demonstrated attention to institutional sources, peer input, audience needs, and genre appropriateness. The shift from “what's the right word?” to “how should this function for the readers?” suggests growing recognition of translation as contextually situated communicative practice rather than bilateral lexical transfer.

Students' Reported AI Use Across Project Stages

Students' reflections reveal changing patterns of AI engagement throughout the bilingual program specification project. With minimal explicit instructor guidance on AI techniques, initial approaches varied between wholesale efficiency-seeking and targeted problem-solving, with students generally willing to experiment with AI capabilities. Through hands-on experience, students gradually developed more cautious approaches and awareness of AI limitations based on their direct encounters with these tools.

Early AI Applications With Varied Approaches (Weeks 11–12)

In early project stages, students used AI tools with notably different approaches. Some groups used ChatGPT primarily for rapid, wholesale translation of sections. One student explained, “For the sake of efficiency, we used AI to

generate bilingual versions for some sections and then manually corrected obvious errors” (Reflective Essay, S12; author’s translation). This approach reflected a focus on generating large amounts of content quickly to overcome time constraints.

Other students took a more targeted, strategic approach from the beginning. Group 1, for instance, used ChatGPT specifically for institutional terms such as *tongshi jiaoyu* 通識教育 (general education) and *ziyou xuanxiu xuefen* 自由選修學分 (elective credits), which are standard in Taiwan’s higher education system but posed challenges when translating for readers unfamiliar with local academic structures. The group then edited the AI output to improve tone and clarity (Reflection Log, G1 W11). Despite these different approaches, both strategies reflect students’ initial openness to using AI for solving immediate translation problems.

Expanded Applications and Increased Selectivity (Weeks 13–14)

By mid-project, students’ reflections revealed more varied AI applications and increased attention to output quality. In addition to their earlier approaches, all three groups reported using AI for specific challenging tasks. For example, Group 2 described using ChatGPT to rephrase specific paragraphs and then manually proofread for tone and fluency (Reflection Log, G2 W13–14). Group 3 reported applying AI to generate formal course descriptions while choosing to draft content they felt confident handling without AI assistance (Reflection Log, G3 W14).

Students also began exploring AI’s broader affordances beyond text generation. Group 2 reported using ChatGPT as an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tool to extract text from organizational charts (Reflection Log, G2 W13), while Group 3 experimented with AI for layout and formatting suggestions (Reflection Log, G3 W13). These applications suggest that students began to view AI as adaptable to different task types rather than solely as a translation tool.

Content synthesis tasks presented another application area. All three groups faced the challenge of consolidating different versions of course descriptions—such as English Composition courses taught across multiple sections by different instructors—into single, coherent descriptions for their program specification. Group 1 reported using ChatGPT to help “generalize the classes that had the same name but different levels” (Reflection Log, G1 W14). Similarly, Group 3 used AI to synthesize course descriptions across different levels and sections, resulting in clearer three-semester progressions in their final draft. These synthesis applications indicate that students recognized AI’s potential for content organization beyond linguistic conversion.

Experience-Based Evaluation Awareness (Week 15)

In their final reflections, students articulated skeptical approaches to AI use that had developed through their hands-on experience with the technology throughout the project. Group 2’s concluding assessment noted that “AI tools were used selectively and outputs were carefully proofread” (Reflection Log, G2 W15), reflecting evaluation practices that had evolved from their direct encounters with AI limitations during the project. This cautious stance was also evident in students’ individual reflective essays. Students noted that AI-generated output, while grammatically sound, often produced awkward phrasing, overly literal translation, or text that lacked appropriate academic tone. One student wrote that AI was “accurate in the beginning but twisted in the end,” requiring full-sentence rewrites (Reflective Essay, S6). Another characterized their evolved approach as “using but not overusing, trusting but not blindly relying” (Reflective Essay, S7; author’s translation). These reflections revealed that through trial and experience, students had developed recognition that AI required careful human oversight rather than blind acceptance.

Summary

Students' AI engagement patterns evolved from varied initial approaches toward experience-based cautious evaluation practices. While some students began with wholesale efficiency-seeking and others with targeted problem-solving, their accumulated hands-on experience led to convergence toward more selective task choices, increased attention to output quality, and recognition that AI support required careful human oversight. The progression from experimental use to experience-based skepticism suggests that students developed nuanced understanding of both AI capabilities and limitations through authentic translation practice.

Discussion

This study examined how undergraduate students developed genre awareness and translation decision-making competencies while collaboratively producing a bilingual program specification—an unfamiliar but highly structured academic genre. The findings suggest that students' learning was shaped not only by their bilingual competence but also by their engagement with institutional norms, reader expectations, and digital tools. The discussion below highlights three interrelated aspects of this learning process: developing genre awareness through scaffolded engagement, evolving translation decision-making practices, and experience-based AI learning.

Emerging Genre Awareness Through Scaffolded Engagement

Students' genre awareness developed progressively from initial content focus to more deliberate attention to structural conventions and reader-oriented design. This temporal progression, evident across all three groups, demonstrates how

novice translators gradually internalize institutional document expectations through guided practice. Students' adoption of formatting elements such as adding title pages and standardized headings only after targeted scaffolding suggests that genre norms, particularly in institutional contexts, are rarely transparent to novice translators (Calvo, 2015; Tardy, 2009).

The project's design, which incorporated sample texts, targeted scaffolding materials, and formatting guidelines introduced at strategic intervals, exemplifies the kind of structured genre learning advocated in the literature (González-Davies, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Kiraly, 2015). Students progressed from imitative use of sample features to broader application of institutional voice principles, ultimately demonstrating metacognitive awareness of genre tensions such as balancing official tone with reader accessibility. This development supports the view that genre knowledge in translator education is best cultivated through situated, production-based tasks that foster both genre sensitivity and translation decision-making competencies (González-Davies & Enríquez-Raído, 2016).

Evolution of Translation Decision-Making Practices

Students' translation approaches evolved from word-level problem-solving toward more contextually informed practices that drew on institutional sources and peer input. This development reflects a growing understanding that institutional translation entails more than transferring meaning; it requires adapting language in light of purpose, institutional context, and genre expectations. The temporal progression from lexical focus through resource consultation to metacognitive quality assessment demonstrates how translation competence develops through structured, collaborative practice.

Students' increasing use of external references such as syllabi, university websites, and Ministry of Education glossaries to verify terminology reflects the

practices of working translators operating within institutional settings (Risku, 2002; Schäffner, 2004). Their consultation of peer input through both internal group discussions and cross-group review activities expanded their repertoire of decision-making criteria beyond individual judgment. These behaviors demonstrate how students gradually assumed the role of context-aware mediators (Kussmaul, 1995; Pym, 2023) rather than merely transferring lexical items.

Experience-Based AI Learning

Students' AI engagement patterns reveal a pedagogically significant finding about how evaluation awareness of digital tools develops in translation contexts. Students began with openness to experimentation—some using wholesale translation approaches for efficiency, others taking more targeted approaches for specific challenging terminology. Through accumulated experience with AI tools, students developed more reflective evaluation practices that culminated in articulated awareness of AI limitations and deliberate review of AI output. The finding contributes to growing scholarship on AI integration in translation education (Öner Bulut & Alimen, 2023; Sahari et al., 2023) by documenting a progression from experimental openness through trial-and-error learning to articulated evaluation practices. This developmental pattern suggests that reflective engagement with emerging technologies develops most effectively through authentic, collaborative tasks rather than theoretical instruction about limitations, with significant implications for how translator education programs approach AI integration.

Importantly, AI engagement intersected meaningfully with students' developing genre awareness and translation decision-making. As students' sensitivity to institutional tone grew, they became better able to recognize when AI-generated text lacked appropriate formality or used promotional language

inconsistent with genre conventions. Similarly, their practice of consulting institutional sources for translation decisions (department websites, Ministry of Education glossaries) provided reference points for judging whether AI suggestions aligned with established institutional discourse. This interconnection suggests that AI literacy in translation contexts develops not in isolation but through integration with genre sensitivity and contextual decision-making.

Conclusion

This study examined how undergraduate students developed genre awareness and translation decision-making competencies while collaboratively producing a bilingual program specification over six weeks. Designed as a collaborative translation project, the task asked students to compile and translate existing departmental information into parallel Chinese and English documents. The findings reveal three interconnected developmental processes: genre awareness progressed from content focus through scaffolded adoption of conventions toward reader-oriented design; translation decision-making evolved from lexical problem-solving through resource consultation to metacognitive quality assessment; and AI learning developed from varied initial approaches through expanded applications to experience-based evaluation.

This research makes two contributions to translation pedagogy scholarship with broader implications for professional education. First, it demonstrates that genre awareness, translation decision-making, and AI literacy develop simultaneously and interdependently rather than sequentially in authentic collaborative contexts. Previous research has typically examined these competencies separately: Tardy (2009) on genre awareness; Risku (2002) on translation competence; Sahari et al. (2023) on AI learning. Our findings reveal that

progress in one area directly informed development in others: Students' genre awareness shaped their AI evaluation practices, while their translation decision-making informed their judgment of AI appropriateness. This interconnected development suggests that translator education benefits from integrated, authentic tasks that allow multiple competencies to emerge together rather than sequential instruction in isolated skills.

Second, our chronological documentation reveals temporal patterns in competency development with implications for pedagogical timing. Students' attention to different aspects of the task evolved progressively—content organization preceded genre convention awareness, which in turn preceded systematic document presentation. Similarly, AI evaluation awareness emerged gradually through accumulated experience rather than immediately. While this study cannot determine optimal timing for specific interventions, it demonstrates that different competencies become salient at different stages of project engagement, suggesting that effective scaffolding may require responsiveness to students' evolving readiness rather than predetermined schedules. These developmental patterns, observed consistently across all three groups over six weeks, advance understanding of how complex professional competencies emerge through sustained engagement with authentic challenges in translator education.

The findings support several practical recommendations for translation pedagogy. Instructors should design project-based learning environments that allow students to encounter genre conventions, translation challenges, and digital tools within authentic collaborative contexts. Scaffolding materials such as sample texts, style guides, and formatting checklists may be most effective when introduced strategically throughout project development, allowing students to recognize their relevance through actual use.

For AI use specifically, providing structured opportunities for experimentation

within authentic translation contexts may support students in developing evaluation awareness through hands-on experience. This supports pedagogical approaches that embed AI tools within collaborative, project-based translation activities where students can discover both capabilities and constraints through direct experience.

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. Conducted within a single undergraduate course with 13 participants, the findings may not generalize across different instructional contexts, student populations, or cultural settings. The analysis relied primarily on students' self-reported experiences through reflection logs and essays, which may not fully capture the complexity of actual learning processes or may reflect idealized accounts of development rather than complete records of actual practices.

Future research could address these limitations through several approaches: Implementing similar projects across multiple contexts to examine transferability; incorporating real-time data such as think-aloud protocols or screen recordings to capture translation decision-making as it unfolds; conducting longitudinal studies to examine whether competencies developed through project-based learning transfer to subsequent translation tasks; and investigating how different levels of scaffolding or collaboration structures affect developmental patterns. Additionally, research examining how the temporal development patterns documented here apply to other genres, language pairs, or professional translation contexts would strengthen understanding of competency development in translator education.

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