TRANSLATION IN CHINA AS A FORM OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION: 
RETHINKING SOCIAL ROLES OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CURRENT 
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis identifies Chinese university situations specific to the transfer of technical communication to China, especially the relationship between general socio-economic settings in China and the influences these general settings have on the university disciplinary structure changes. The objective of this research is to reveal openings in translation discipline as a shell for technical communication to merge with. The necessities for the merger and the reasons for choosing translation as the right discipline are analyzed through the conception of institutionalization by Berger and Luckman and the theory of power relations by Michel de Certeau. Earlier attempts of U.S. technical communication to reach China are reanalyzed to expose both accomplishments and problems in these efforts. In order to show the openings of translation discipline for technical communication, a survey has been conducted among Chinese translation professionals to reveal tensions in the development of translation theories and practices. It is concluded that the merger of technical communication with translation can both gain technical communication a pivotal status of being a discipline in Chinese universities and solve some problems of the translation field. More importantly, such a merger offers a future-oriented perspective of development for the merged discipline to ride more successfully the stably growing Chinese economic growth.
To my Grandfather, who has taught me how to think;

and my Grandmother, whose diligence is easy to see, but takes a lifetime to live up to.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

An Overview of the Studies of Technical Communication in China by U.S. Technical Communicators

Current studies in the U.S. about influences and general contexts of technical communication in China can be largely classified into four categories: 1. General changes about Chinese economic and social developments in the years after China’s opening up to the outside world (Tegtmeier et al. 36-41); 2. Chinese people’s ways of perceiving social relations, establishing and maintaining either personal or business relations that are bound by Chinese cultures (Coggin and Coggin 389-96, Dragga 365-81); 3. The current situations of Chinese business settings and practices for possible development of technical communication (Wiles 371-84); and 4. Business trips and educational tours by U.S. technical communicators at Chinese universities (Ding and Jablonski 421-34, Barnum et al. 397-20). These studies all aim at understanding Chinese situations from different aspects for opportunities of accessing technical communication to China. However, because the majority of the authors who published in the U.S. technical communication professional journals have limited experiences in Chinese general political, economic, and cultural settings, some connections among facts in universities and in the business world vital in positioning the migrating technical communication field at Chinese universities are not recognized or analyzed. Therefore, there is, to a certain degree, a decontextualized reading of the Chinese academic situations and a general description of the social, economic, and political situations in China. Usually, these studies are either too vague to yield practical suggestions or too general to guide specific activities of technical communication in China.
Aim of the Thesis

In order to find a clear way for technical communication to be accepted by Chinese society, some of the facts in literature published in American technical communication journals need reinvestigation and reanalysis. In other words, the vast differences of Chinese culture have their counter effects on U.S. technical communicators who aim to find ways for technical communication to be introduced in China. Due to largely different practices, beliefs, and common senses in China, U.S. technical communicators’ understandings of Chinese culture oftentimes slip into the American cultural background and contexts whose influences American technical communicators may overlook. As a result, some basic facts with precise descriptions fail to link to their proper cultural and economic origins to yield insights for practical actions. Some explanations of Chinese phenomena are not pointed to causes set deeply in Chinese contexts. Therefore, facts documented about China need to be connected to their specific cultural and economic origins, which often escape U.S. technical communicators’ observations.

More urgently, the suggestion of how to establish technical communication as a discipline in Chinese universities remains undertheorized. The institutionalized status of technical communication at U.S. universities is not comparable with the status of technical communication in Chinese universities. There is less research and literature addressing Chinese university disciplines in an institutionalized way and seeking to establish technical communication in Chinese universities as a discipline. Because of the undertheorized areas of university disciplines and the undertheorized interplay between these areas and their specific socio-economic environments, the previous practices of
teaching at and accessing technical communication to Chinese universities can only be stated as partially successful.

Technical communication in China, I would argue, has no status, a situation I will call “the nonstatus of technical communication” hereafter. This nonstatus of technical communication can be discerned in the accounts of previous attempts of the transfer. This status also supports the approach that I advocate: to view the establishment of technical communication as a discipline as both a long-term goal and, more importantly, a strategy for introducing technical communication to China. The field of technical communication has met with resistance in Chinese universities in terms of where the field should be located. It could be located in English programs, but the focus there tends to be more literary. Instead, I argue that a better place for technical communication programs to be housed in Chinese universities would be in translation programs because of their closer relationship with business, industry and the practical concerns of language.

Rationale of the Research

Theoretical Basis and Methodology

This thesis adopts as its first intellectual basis the concept of “institutionalization” (Berger and Luckmann 47). According to the two authors, institutionalization is the process in which human relationships are formed by individual human beings as social relationships: “A solitary human being is being on the animal level. As soon as one observes phenomena that are specifically human, one enters the realm of the social” (51). And “social order is [, therefore,] a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production” (52). This process of institutionalization is important to explain the social control that the institutionalized relationships have upon other uninstitutionalized
activities. In fact, “to say that a segment of human activity has been institutionalized is already to say that this segment of human activity has been subsumed under social control” (55).

Chinese universities and the already established disciplines have institutionalized status. This institutionalized status regulates their usual conducts and ideologies, defining the proper ones and excluding others. In this case, technical communication as a migrating discipline has to be accepted by the universities and specific disciplines in order to share the resources there. In summary, disciplines in Chinese universities still take institutionalized precedence over technical communication.

Without a disciplinary status, technical communication practices in China, if there is such a category, remain nameless and lack not only status but also systematic and mature theories. For this reason, efforts by U.S. technical communicators to reach China have been largely misused: the Barnum delegation’s mission has been directed to teach a group of high school and college teachers for their required trainings on linguistics and teaching methodology instead of technical communication (397-20); worse still, the Ding delegation taught mainly secondary school students coming for the Spoken English training (421-34); The two delegations’ experiences may have led Bebbie Wiles, a former member of the 1997 Tegtmeier delegation, to such a hypothesis. While detailing a 2002 exchange meeting, Wiles writes,

after reading about the complexities of establishing technical communication pedagogy in China (Barnum and others 2001), I had begun hypothesizing that Chinese industry may provide a less encumbered route into technical communication pedagogy in China. (381)
If there is frustration in China for U.S technical communicators, then there must be reasons behind that. If the reasons causing this frustration cannot be found, then any efforts, regardless of those in the academic environments or in business and/or industry settings, will have no clear guides. As I will argue in the second chapter, the fundamental reason for this misuse of technical communicators from the U.S. is that, without the disciplinary status, technical communication cannot assume a position at Chinese universities that it can at American universities. Without the disciplinary status, the recognition of technical communication in China remains a problem. Also, without the disciplinary status, the efforts by U.S. technical communicators cannot accumulate to a strategic change. So, the constitution of technical communication as a discipline is the fundamental mission of the technical communication field. With a disciplinary status in Chinese universities, technical communication will be able to recruit its own students, educate and produce its own faculty, and then establish clear career paths that have remained largely implicit and obscure thus far. The institutional position of technical communication in Chinese universities is, therefore, of fundamental importance to the development of technical communication.

Yet the path for technical communication to acquire its disciplinary status is far from being smooth, as can be seen from the experiences of the Barnum delegation and the Ding delegation. If, as I try to make clear also in chapter two, technical communication is not a discipline in China, what should be done to establish it as one? How to realize this pivotal change from none to existence? If the previous U.S. technical communicators have not succeeded in establishing that status, then what can be done to maneuver a path for the field to be transferred into Chinese universities? I argue in
chapter two and prove in chapter three that in order to establish the disciplinary status for technical communication in China, there needs to be adequate in-depth analysis of Chinese university situations with respect to the agendas situated in the general social structures and specific practices and analysis of the present incoherence between translation theories and practices. These descriptions and analysis aim at providing U.S technical communicators with a clear picture of Chinese universities situations, a vital context for the technical communication transfer.

In chapter two, apart from the conception of institutionalization fundamental to this thesis, I also use Michel de Certeau’s theory of power relations between strategies and tactics. In chapter three, I analyzed the new trends of translation to find problems and incoherence in the development of the translation discipline. By analyzing the changes of problems and emergence of new trends in translation, I attempt to trace current general economic and social settings behind these changes. I choose to analyze the translation discipline instead of other Chinese disciplines because of the following: 1. Translation has a market that is more sensitive to political and socio-economic factors, especially economic factors. So the analysis of changes in the translation field is more likely to be connected to a larger picture of Chinese socio-economic development; 2. Translation is more practical than other English disciplines such as linguistics, literature, cultural studies, and even writing. Those disciplines are more inclined to pure academic research and English language pedagogy than to practices of their corresponding fields. Writing course/discipline is far from being a mature course or discipline, and most likely, in business settings, tasks that can be done by writers can oftentimes be done by translators in less time, given the fact that the much more mature forms of various documents
existing in English can be more readily translated than written from scratch. Based on these two understandings, I choose translation not only as the comparable discipline for the clarification of Chinese socio-economic settings, but also as the discipline for technical communication to merge with, given the difficulties and complexities that the previous U.S. technical communicators have already experienced in their efforts to introduce technical communication directly to China.

Furthermore, because the merger that I propose is based on the assumption that technical communication can be used by translation as a solution for the betterment of both theories and practices in the translation field, I emphasis on the different opinions, oftentimes conflicting ones, in translation in order to show what technical communication can serve as a mend. In this analysis, the norms of translation are not only questionable because we do not know to what extent they remain norms or in the mainstream, but the norms are also less representative than that in statistical studies. This is because one of the purposes of this thesis is to find openings for changes in the discursive direction of translation. With this purpose, the difference of opinions within the translation field, instead of the norms, should rightly be the focus. In this sense, the analysis of the survey in chapter three is actually less like a usual statistical analysis of means and deviations.

Chapter four offers the benefits that technical communication in the U.S. can gain from this merger. I posit this issue as a separate chapter because I believe again that establishing technical communication in China has its strategic importance both to the U.S technical communication field and technical communication as a whole. But since technical communication in the U.S. has its own agendas, just as the emerging technical communication in China will have its own, to establish a discipline in another country
may not be every U.S. technical communicator’s priority. So benefits for U.S. technical communication need to be articulated in order for this branch of overall technical communication discourse to gain more incentives and input from the U.S. side. In this chapter, the benefits and the strategic importance of introducing and establishing technical communication as a discipline in Chinese universities are summarized. The most important benefits for the technical communication field are that the introduction may establish new social recognition, a new market for technical communication and a future profession.

The problems of translation cannot be remedied completely by technical communication itself. On the contrary, the exposition of the problems of the translation discipline may show more than one possible alternative of merging or other types of cooperation for technical communication to gain its institutional status and to offer a practical guide to actions. A change of perspective may as well result in different solutions for a smooth transfer. But as sure as the transfer of technical communication can benefit both Chinese universities and societies at large, this transfer can also lead the profession in the U.S. to another chapter.
CHAPTER II. ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE ON TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IN CHINA

Nonstatus of Technical Communication in China

Although technical communication as a discipline was arguably established in the U.S. in the 1950s (Kynell 149), it still has no disciplinary status in Chinese universities. This sharp contrast of disciplinary statuses between technical communications in U.S. universities and in Chinese universities constitutes a difficulty for U.S. technical communicators to observe and establish proper links to analyze Chinese technical communication facts because, frequently, the understanding and the analysis, mainly by the American technical communicators, of technical communication in China becomes interpreted according to U.S. contexts. This is also because without an adequate understanding of Chinese economic developments and political changes; without understanding the mutual influences of these changes and the academic development in China, problems of the Chinese universities cannot be made clear, nor can a clear path be mapped out for the introduction of technical communication to Chinese universities.

Although the previous articles published in Technical Communication about technical communication transfer to China have tackled various problems of accessing technical communication in China, the nonstatus of technical communication actually is the nexus of all problems because it is not only a major change of status from the profession in the U.S., but it is also based on the comparison between the established disciplines in Chinese universities and the migrating technical communication.

The nonstatus of technical communication in Chinese universities is shown in several aspects: 1. It has no specific system of theories and practices of learning; 2. It has
no dedicated faculty; 3. It has no students majoring in this area; 4. It has no market place. By market place I mean career paths and social recognition that established programs or/and disciplines usually have in order to guide the social demands for employees. These career paths and social recognition of a certain program or/and discipline as such create an important space in a certain society, offering chances and room for disciplinary development in academies. These four aspects are both the characteristics of technical communication in China and the difficulties for technical communication to acquire its disciplinary status in Chinese universities.

Tegtmeier et al.’s “China is Hungry,” describing a situation in China in 1997, is one of the first attempts to explore conditions of technical communication development in China. The authors find that technical communication is “a field at its earliest stages, unrecognized as a separate profession, or academic discipline” (36). This observation is both true and problematic because, according to the viewpoint of American technical communicators, the nonstatus of technical communication can be viewed as the “earliest stage” in its development since there is yet any discursive establishment of technical communication in China. However, it is problematic because, since technical communication is neither a profession nor an academic discipline, then it lacks status and is nameless—the “earliest stage” is a judgment based only on U.S. technical communication development. Without any trajectory of development, or any discursive accumulation, it is questionable to say that it is a “stage” at all.

Closely observed, this problem is not only a matter of expression, for it is the contradiction lying in the expression that actually shows a basic difficulty of identification of technical communication. As a discipline out of its native land, technical
communication has lost both of its physical base and its cultural basis, its resources, its faculty, and its students once it leaves the U.S. The nonstatus of technical communication in China forces U.S. technical communicators to find similar elements in this foreign land and to take these elements for a fundamental construction. But with the changed social settings, the apparent surface similarities may be misleading since they may as well belong to discourses that can be neither compared nor computable with U.S. technical communication.

The Tegtmeier delegation’s observation of Chinese technical communication shows this problem as an internal conflict of the article. In the third section titled “China is Hungry for Technical Communication,” the delegation discovers:

In general, technical communication in China is written by scientists and engineers for other scientists and engineers . . . . None are trained as technical communicators or perceive themselves as technical communicators. In fact, [the delegation] discovered that technical communication is often interpreted as telecommunication and technical editing as television or film editing (italics original). (40)

Problems concerning the identity of technical communication exposed in this observation are at least twofold: 1. It indicates that technical communication is practiced but not recognized as an explicit body of knowledge or a fixed name; 2. It indicates this ad hoc technical communication has vast different audiences, purposes, and diverse practices. Then the contradiction appears again: With both the writers and audiences being “scientists and engineers,” technical communication thus recognized and pinned
down is not technical communication as defined and accepted in the U.S. sense. How, then, can we say that it can be called technical communication at all?

Without a disciplinary status as the starting point, neither market place of the practices nor social identities of the practitioners can be cultivated and secured. As the delegation observes, none of the technical communication practitioners are “trained as technical communicators or perceive themselves as technical communicators” (40). With the market place categorized and operating under other names, even if there are technical communication practitioners, they are not working explicitly as technical communicators. As a result, it is only natural that the majority of Chinese college faculty cannot recognize technical communication.

The U.S. technical communicators’ lack of understanding of the nonstatus of technical communication in China makes it difficult for them to pinpoint the place of their observations and analysis. In this same article, the vast contrast of technical communication in two countries possibly has struck the U.S. technical communicators with a loss of context. Following the previous quote, the article also discusses the “potential of its women writers” and “segregation of the sexes” (41). Whereas technical communication in China as a whole lacks status, its establishment and manifestation as a discipline has a far more urgent priority than who practices it. In other words, if technical communication in China cannot be, and has not been, established as a profession, the discussion of women or men writers is not as immediately important. While this continuation of the article may suggest an urgent U.S. technical communication agenda, a mention of this issue in Chinese contexts shows a lack of understanding of the changed status of technical communication from the U.S. to China, a lack of understanding of
Chinese social context, and a tendency to copy what is in the U.S. to China as the technical communication proper.

This nonstatus situation of technical communication is shown in the other two articles as all the difficulties of recruitment of students, the difficulties of carrying out systematic knowledge, and the difficulties of finding understandings and cooperation in Chinese faculty. Clearly influenced by the over-optimistic views in “China is Hungry,” two American technical communicators’ two-week teaching experiences at Suzhou University tell about the difficulties of the nonstatus of technical communication, all too different from the situations described in “China is Hungry.”

The first difficulty was posed by the university’s administrative power. As technical communicators, Ding and Jablonski intend to “focus on current issues in technical communication including research and pedagogy and finally discuss teaching of technical communication” (422). This attempt was to teach maximally the current achievements in the technical communication field to Chinese students, but the Dean of Suzhou University suggested to the two American technical communicators that “[they] should teach spoken English instead of technical communication” (422), showing little understanding of the potential of this budding discipline in China. Whereas it might be because that in Suzhou University, spoken English has a higher priority than technical communication, this lack of understanding of technical communication and emphasis on general English education shows that Suzhou University as an established institution had the controlling power over resources and had made a decision that was disadvantageous to the transfer of technical communication to China.
By contrast, the Ding delegation had to obey the rules of the universities in China. With repeated explanations to the Suzhou University administrative staff, the two U.S. technical communicators finally reached an agreement with Suzhou University that both technical communication and spoken English would be taught. They were also informed that thirty faculty members and graduate students from Suzhou University [would] attend, but as it turned out, the students were from diverse academic backgrounds in which the majority was secondary school students. These students had no adequate English acquisition for the lectures of technical communication. In fact, the two U.S. technical communicators had to “write on the chalkboard almost every sentence [they speak]” (423). These students were informed by the university that they were attending classes in intensive English conversation taught by native speakers. With no control over the assignment of teaching materials and over the recruitment of students, the Ding delegation realized that it was “impossible for [them] to focus solely on technical communication” (423).

When the two technical communicators conducted a survey later for both the students and the faculty members of the department, the results from the students and from the faculty members were almost the same: They both regarded writing purpose, instead of audience, as the most important element in technical writing. Virtually, this coincidence of the survey results showed that neither students nor faculty members were clear about technical communication.

Without a disciplinary status, the failure to realize the original objectives of initiating technical communication was not accidental. What we can see here is that without disciplinary status, technical communication has no power for its social
recognition and circulation in China as knowledge. It is not hard to imagine that even if
the seeds of technical communication had been sown, shown by the difficulties Ding and
Jablonski have faced, it would still be difficult for the plants to grow.

Knowledge has to have a power to go with it to ensure its legitimacy as
knowledge. Without that power, the sheer attempt of knowledge will fail because the
very status of knowledge is under the question. In China, technical communication needs
more administrative power or cooperation from institutions to ensure an adequate degree
of power for the knowledge of technical communication to be recognized. In this way,
the aim of establishing technical communication as a discipline not only is the future plan
for the introduction of technical communication, but it also carries immediate importance
of securing the very first attempts of introduction of technical communication into
Chinese universities.

As illuminated by Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*
discussing power relations between strategies and tactics,

> every ‘strategic’ rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its ‘own’
> place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an ‘environment.’
> . . . In other words, *a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge*
> and not merely its effect or its attribute (italics original). (36)

In de Certeau’s theory, the strategic action starts when it seeks the land of
autonomy from the environment. In the case of technical communication transfer,
Chinese universities can be defined as the environment. As evidenced by Barnum
delegation’s and Ding delegation’s experiences, the precondition for technical
communication to be treated as knowledge is its disciplinary status. This disciplinary
status is not a final result that can only be desired after a certain level of development of technical communication has been reached. Rather, it should be the aim from the very beginning of the transfer.

*Bid for Power in China*

With the aim of establishing technical communication as a discipline to gain that strategic power, it is important to remember that technical communication in China, due to its nonstatus, remains, up to now, a much weaker force. As anticipated by de Certeau also in his discussion of power relations, “the weaker the forces at the disposition of the strategists . . . the more the strategy is transformed into tactics” (37). Compared with the already established disciplines in Chinese universities, technical communication can rely more on tactics to seek opportunities for its strategic aim of acquiring disciplinary status, since, according to de Certeau, tactics are the tools of the weaker to penetrate the stronger strategic power. His understanding of tactics can both serve as a theory and guidance to actions:

[A] tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. (36-37)

“By the absence of a proper locus,” the acquisition of power for technical communication should be through tactics. The function of technical communication has to depend on the place of other disciplines. It also has to adapt itself to the regulations of Chinese universities, which are the manifestation of the “terrain” and the “law of a
foreign power.” Oftentimes, because the tactic is the weaker of the two forces, the law has a status of not a foreign power, but of a native power, given its central status of the dichotomy. So, here the law of the “native” power is Chinese universities disciplines and their regulations. Technical communication, in this case, is the outsider, the foreign force. This paradoxical change of central force of the dichotomy is caused by the differences of the two forces. The changes made for the transfer of technical communication, therefore, have its binary characteristics. On one hand, without changes, technical communication cannot be accepted by Chinese universities; on the other hand, the changes are not made to cope with the strategic forces of Chinese universities entirely. It, instead, contains the tactics that American technical communicators make to achieve the goal of establishing technical communication as a discipline. In other words, the different situations in China offer different opportunities which may as well require different approaches for different results, so, the changes are an action both to undo the regulations and to gain more strategic freedom, or, in de Certeau’s term, “autonomy.”

The changes of aims of the educational tour and the teaching methods made by both the Ding and the Barnum delegations represent typical examples of showing the weaker force and maneuvering for the appropriate status. As depicted in the article “Globalizing Technical Communication: A Field Report from China,” the Barnum delegation aims at introducing technical communication “into some existing courses” (417). This is a highly tactical move with strategic aims because the existing courses not only have the social recognition and their career paths established, but they also have the already established curricula and, therefore, other privileged positions in the overall university structure. Technical communication introduced into these courses offers itself
a protection, a disguise as being a native course, to enjoy privileges, to evade barriers, and to achieve its aim of disciplinary status. This tactic has already had the strategic objective of linking itself with the existing courses. The Barnum delegation’s proposal is in agreement with de Certeau’s description of a tactic “playing on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power” (36-37).

In all, the nonstatus of technical communication in China is the pivot of the difficulties experienced by the American technical communicators. All the efforts need to point in acquiring the disciplinary status for technical communication and the disciplinary status determines both the current and future actions of technical communication transfers. Given the sharp contrast of forces of power, highly tactical movements are the key to the strategy of establishing technical communication as a discipline at Chinese universities.

Reasons for Translation

For technical communication to become accepted in Chinese universities, translation, as an established discipline, offers a shell. The reasons are threefold: 1. Translation has a large potential market in today’s economic context; 2. Theories and practices in technical communication in the United States can provide new channels for the development of both technical communication and translation; translation can allow a Chinese type of technical communication and provide new ways for technical communication developments; 3. In China, where English is a foreign language, translation has already had a large market in the Chinese economy. Therefore, translation as a discipline is, I argue, an optimum place for technical communication to prosper in China.
From two aspects I support my argument. First, the current development of translation has incentives from Chinese economic and social developments. Second, in chapter three, I analyze a survey of new trends in translation to find new developments in theories and practices; these developments enable the future-oriented connections between translation and technical communication.

**Chinese Economic Development**

The economic developments in China are major incentives for the development of translation. The online source in FindArticles reveals China’s annual per capita GDP growth rate at 8.4 percent from late 1970s to date. The staggering speed of its development is felt by virtually everyone who pays attention to China. In 1999, Seligman noted that: “. . . the situation [in China] usually changes before the ink has had a chance to dry on the page” (5). However, this observation, according to Coggin and Coggin’s experiences, “. . . does not really accurately portray the speed with which China is changing” (390). Coggin and Coggin note that throughout the country, where in the morning were fields of crops are in the afternoon the foundations of tall buildings . . . Just as rapidly, governmental policies, attitudes toward foreign investment and involvement, and notions about the relationship between individual prosperity and socialist policy change. (390)

If Coggin and Coggin’s experiences were individual views, the special issue of *Fortune* in October, 2004, draws a more general picture of economic development in China: Under the general topic “Inside the New China: the Companies, Consumers, and Innovators Shaping the World’s Hottest Economy,” a group of articles explore China’s
changes in different aspects, ranging from the political system (Chandler 84-98), the automobile and computer industries (Taylor 102-10, Vogelstein 127-36) to natural resources (Stein 115-24), education (Chandler 138-50), sustainable economic development (Lashinsky 181-84), and scientific development (Stipp 187-96). While *Fortune* depicts the rapid rates of developments and exposes China’s ingrained problems in the process of these developments, it also charts the developments in world consumption, an important factor of development: aluminum, from 10.3 % in 1996 to 18.6 % in 2003; copper, 10.4 % in 1998 to 19.7 % in 2003; and finished steel, 16.2 % in 1998 to 26.9 % in 2003. China’s consumption of more sophisticated individual household appliances are: cell phones, 7.5 % in 1998 to 20.1 % in 2003; computers, 3.3 % in 1998 to 6.1 % in 2002; microwaves, 7.9 % in 1998 to 12.1 % in 2002, and washing machines, 10.6 % in 1998 to 18.0 % in 2002 (Cherry 152-53). Apart from the consumption of metals as the major indicator of industrial growth, the development of household apparatuses consumption indicates an ever-growing need for information from end users. The international trade between the U.S. and China also yields an export surplus of computer components from China, indicating the compositional changes in China’s export from labor-intensive products to more technology-intensive products. The economic growth provides conditions for university development.

*Conditions of General English Education*

While the demand from the business world may suggest a possible overall development in Chinese universities, the backwardness of general English education prevents non-English major disciplines from being chosen as the shell for technical communication. Due to historical reasons, English education in China has a short history.
Only in the early 1980’s, more and more universities began English education. In the Tegtmeier delegation visit to China, one of the professors in Suzhou University points out the vast number of English learners by saying that “fifty million people are now learning English” (Tegtmeier et al. 36). Compared with the total Chinese population of one point three billion, fifty million is less than one twenty-sixth of the population, or less than four out of every one hundred people. Despite the possible high progress rate, the average acquisition of general English is still very low, indicating the reason why general English is highly demanded by general public in China.

With the current situation of general English education, there are at least two effects. First, it means that, compared with translation from English to Chinese and from Chinese to English, the direct writing in English is more difficult, and therefore, less likely to be successful for the nonnative speakers of English in Chinese universities. The course of English for Special Purposes may look like a close one with technical communication, but this course is usually conducted in private universities, or universities specializing in sciences and technology. Students with comparatively better English often go to language universities instead of these universities. Thus, this course does not carry enough strength for technical communication to merge with. Second, because of the gap between the increasing demand of international trade in China and the general low average of English acquisition, and also because English remains a language of a small percent of the whole population, thus, translation profession is put forward by the economic demands. Therefore, the increasing demand of international communication results in the development of translation as both a profession and an academic discipline.
This trend of development is shown by Jinbo Wang’s, a translation instructor in Shanghai Jiaotong University, response to the survey,

Translation has become the livelihood for a continually growing number of people. More young college students aspire to add to their professional profile by taking translation courses and sitting for certification examinations.

In fact, the great tension between the increasing demand of English major graduates and the limited supply of them has reached such a degree that some universities still employ new graduates with bachelor’s degree of English as university instructors. In other words, the growing university systems have consumed a number of its own English graduates, which further gravitates the tension between the informational demands of the general public in China and the short supply of translation professionals.

In all, with English remaining as the lingua franca of the international business world, with the average low acquisition of English, the privileged position of translation in Chinese society in general and Chinese universities in particular will be further strengthened. Thus, it is safe for technical communication to choose translation as the shell to establish its disciplinary status.
CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY

Background of the Survey

In order to track the current situations and new developments in the translation field, I conducted a survey in November, 2004. In the analysis of answers to the survey, I highlight the underlying socio-political and economic forces and attempt to find an access for technical communication to merge with translation. Then I discuss how this merger will benefit both technical communication and translation.

New trends in translation stand for the new socio-economic situation related to the translation field in China. The changes of the subjects of the translated material will greatly influence the perspectives and the ways that translation will be done in the future. In this sense, the manifestation of the new trends will show clearly the possible positions of technical communication in the translation field.

I also tried to find different opinions about new trends in translation. An analysis of these opinions should reveal the current statuses of translation in different socio-economic aspects in China. I assume that the differences found in the survey will reflect the working environment of each translation professional; therefore, the survey, in general, offers a glimpse into the different aspects of the profession to enable me to draw a sketch of the current status of the profession in order for technical communication to be established.

Design of the Questionnaire

The survey is arranged into four sections. Section one is about the background information of the participants. This section asks about participants’ employment, current occupation, length of time in the field, the frequency that participants translate, the
resources that participants use in order to keep up-to-date about new developments in the field, and a brief career summary. Section two deals with the translation process regarding the changes of translators’ roles and the influence of new tools such as computer technology and the internet. Furthermore, it shows the relationship between source language, translator, and target language and the major challenges in the development of translation. Section three asks participants to identify new changes and predict the future of translation; moreover, it deals with the future change of roles in the era of computer technology and the optimum working pattern, should translation be done by more than one translator. Section four accounts for the changes of the participants’ specific fields and asks the participants to identify the possible causes of these changes.

In order to leave room for participants to express their ideas, the survey has a large proportion of open-ended questions (12 questions out of 22) that demand participants to write their answers. Of the remaining nine multiple-choice questions, three provide space in case the participants have specific answers.

In order to seek the best possible unbiased answers from the participants, the survey is titled New Trends in the Translation Field. Technical communication is not mentioned to the participants.

Thus designed, the survey provides a coverage ranging from specific individual working patterns and subjective understandings of their roles in their intellectual environment to general trends towards the future of translation in specific areas, as well as to the influence of computer technology and specific working environments. The open-ended questions, as shown by the results, offer participants freedom for the detailed descriptions of their individual situations.
Recruitment of the Survey Participants

To recruit the survey participants, I emailed the translation professionals whom I know in China and asked them to relay the questionnaire to other translation professionals. By using this method to expand samples, I was able to acquire twelve participants. As shown in the first section of the survey questions, five participants are teaching translation in four different universities. One is working for a transnational corporation named Filmate Productions, one for Huawei, the largest one of the four big electronic and telecommunication corporations in China. Three are from a half-government-owned and half-private-owned translation and international transaction organization. One is from the Office of Translation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. All the participants typically have six to ten years of experience in the translation field. This group of participants are quite representative. First, they form a variety of career paths which represent government and private owned organizations, government and private owned enterprises, and universities. Second, majority of the participants have been in the translation profession for more than six years and less than ten years. If the participants are teaching at universities, they are around the time to apply for their associate professorship, which means that this group most likely stays current in their academic development. If the participants are from business settings, they should also have been very experienced in their translation practices. One more advantage for the non-academic based translation professionals is that, with the working experience more than six years, their conceptions of translation practices should have been adapted to the requirements of their respective business settings. In other words, the book knowledge that they learned more than six years ago should have been redefined through their work
experiences. In this case, they would be able to provide answers evidencing their different business settings.

For two participants, Jinbo Wang and Ying He, I conducted another round of email interviews in order to clarify and further inquire about the points they made in the questionnaire. The results of the further inquiries expose some of the in-depth questions which technical communication can offer possible answers.

New Changes in the Translation Field

Indicating the trend of the discipline development of translation, Jinbo Wang from Shanghai Jiaotong University and Ying He from Xi’an International Studies University state translation has been acquiring a more consolidated institutional status. As stated by Wang in the questionnaire, “Translation Studies are steadily establishing itself as an academic discipline in its own right on the Chinese mainland, with more and more PhD programs [at different universities] in place.” His claim coincides with Ying He, a translation instructor at Xi’an International Studies University (XISU), located in the economically less advanced Northwest China. With more than six years of experience, Ying He states her career as being “a teacher of translation and interpretation at XISU, occasionally work[ing] for translation companies and government conferences” in the questionnaire. She continues to state that “translation as a specialization appeared to be inferior to others like literature, linguistics. These days, however, the condition is largely improved. Translation is to be set up as a special department at my university [XISU].”

The development of translation in its institutional status is also shown in students’ enrollment. As noted by Jinbo Wang in the questionnaire, “translation has become the livelihood for a continually growing number of people. More young college students
aspire to add to their professional profile by taking translation courses and sitting for certification examinations.” Wang attributes increased enrollments and development of the institutional status to the large socio-economic context of globalization and internationalization. These two causes, Wang claims “bring us ever closer together and hence [create] more urgent need to transcend the linguistic and cultural barriers between us (people in different cultures).” Ying He writes quite similar ideas in the questionnaire: “Socio-economic status changes dramatically and can be felt even in the ivory tower of universities. Students are more eager to learn translation for their future career. [Oral] interpretation is attracting more.” As for the causes of the changes, Ying He attributes them to “China’s rapid economic growth and frequent contact with other countries.”

This development of institutional status in translation as a discipline offers technical communication a changing environment to build upon. On one hand, even in the technical communication field in the U.S., translation is a budding branch, gaining momentum from the internationalization and localization of the American businesses and other industries. On the other hand, China’s developing economy, science, and technology all demand increasing amount of information from other cultures, lending translation a high priority in both disciplinary development and in practice. Evolving by absorbing new ideas in other fields, translation is better than other disciplines as a rising platform for technical communication. If properly accessed, it can be appropriated to integrate technical communications to change the practices and theories. In this sense, the maturing process of translation, together with the fact that the translation discipline in China and the survey results shows different, sometimes conflicting ideas, open up the possibility for the inclusion of technical communication. Thus, the gap that exists in
theories and practices has its auspicious implications: it begins a possibility of an alternative path of development, a development that can be beneficial to both fields.

Social Gaps between Theories and Practices in Translation

As stated by two participants working in universities and shown in all the results of the questionnaire, the gap between theory and practice is felt by every participant. This gap is manifested as not just the difference between academia and real world practices; rather, the gap shows a social hierarchy generally favoring theory construction in universities, shown in the translation material choice. Jinbo Wang, a PhD student in Translation Studies at Shanghai International Studies University, with special emphasis on literary translation, is also a full-time instructor teaching translation at Shanghai Jiaotong University. Starting to translate in 1993, he has been in the translation field for twelve years. He notes in his reply to the questions, “It is difficult to narrow the yawning gap between theory and practice.” While it is apparent that he indicates a necessity of “narrowing the gap,” he clearly states that he “does believe that literary translation (a genre that is maintained and circulated in the academy alone and is more closely related to translation theory discussion than to practices) enjoys higher prestige than technical translation simply because of the authority of literary creation.” Wang admits that “the market of literary translation is much smaller than that of commercial, technical, legal translation, or non-literary, pragmatic translation in general.” These translation practices are referred to as technical translation in his previous quote. And as I notice later, Wang uses technical translation and pragmatic translation interchangeably to mean actually all kinds of non-literary translation genres. Here, Wang not only realizes this gap between the economic differences of the translation discipline and translation practice, but he also
chooses to ride this trend by “doing technical translation (meaning non-literary translation) for money, and literary [translation] for fun and academic promotion.”

Wang uses “do believe,” “higher prestige,” “simply because of,” and “authority” to emphasize a higher position he feels about the genre of literary translation, carrying with him confidence ensured by the established normal conducts of the institutional status of translation. The tension between what Wang experiences and what he chooses as the solution shows a more basic conflict of the translation field. Its biased knowledge structure cannot be straightened by its practitioners. The prestige of literary translation and the preference of translation theory scholarship over translation practice further formulated Wang’s individual choice of literary translation as his personal socio-economic path for more freedom and space; thus, individual scholars’ preference of institutionalized literary translation and translation theories is more than just individual. Rather, the knowledge structure of the field has formed a set of rules leading individual’s choice by defining the proper conducts and assigning resources to the direction of consolidating further the verity of the social positions of literary translation and translation theory for the academic-based translation professionals. This higher social position of literary translation and translation theories yielded from the higher institutionalized status forms its own ideology for its own better survival and prosperity. It is safe to assume that this is one of the reasons why Wang states he does “literary [translation] for fun and academic promotion (italics added)” in the follow-up email. His practices are possibly also the reason that Wang personally believes that “technical translation is less challenging than literary translation.” Also this higher social position of literary translation and translation theories has, to some extent, made the gap between
social positions seem natural. As stated by Wang in the email, “literary translation has its own market and orbit of production and transmission while pragmatic translation has its own.” It is true that literary translation and pragmatic translation have different markets and orbits, but the problem is that in universities, literary translation is held as the only proper thing to teach and to learn. In this context, it is natural to assume that by suggesting that literary translation and pragmatic translation have different trajectories, Wang explicitly suggests that literary translation and translation theory have gained a status of being synonymous with the status of university scholarship and as the proper translation practice and research. By contrast, the same suggestion may be read as pragmatic translation should rightly be kept outside the academia.

This general position of literary translation and translation theory as the proper translation practices and researches is also echoed in Ying He’s observation. In the interview, Ying He clearly identifies “number of essays published in professional periodicals” and the mastery of “translation theories” respectively, as the two leading factors yielding the success for translators; the concept of “success” has therefore been largely modified and manipulated by the established institutional requirements for the translation professionals within the translation academia. While she hails a development that translation as a discipline “is largely improved . . . these days” and the translation department is to be set up in her university, she, at the same time, in answering the question of the “major cause hindering the development in the field of translation,” notes that “the actual translation practices are always looked down upon and earn a meager pay.” In actual translation practices, she further delineates a finer distinction that “written translation is not earning as much as oral interpretation. And the position is still not
high.” Possibly being enlightened by the translation practices outside the academia, Ying He answers question ten quite differently from other participants: “It is my personal opinion that the reader plays the most significant role, and all the others are centered on it. There are arguments against this view, but many practitioners are following this view.” By “the reader,” Ying He refers to people who would be called “end users” in U.S. technical communication. This answer, if put in the context of Chinese universities, offers a clearly different scenario of social status changes of the academic-based translation scholars. Traditionally, and it is still true today, teachers in China enjoy both respect and prestige from students and Chinese society as a whole. The translation practices subject college translation practitioners to the judgment and requirements of business agendas, which may go against the prestigious position of the academic-based translation scholars. This observation possibly helps explain the academic-based translation scholars’ reluctance of doing translation practices and also shows the emerging audience awareness for even some of the university-based translation scholars. Furthermore, Ying He’s observation also manifests the lack of theories for the non-literary translation practitioners, a lack that translation discipline has not considered as being such.

Integrating the two participants’ answers about the new trends of social and economic aspects of the translation profession, it seems safe to find a hierarchy based on academic translation: Translation theories, together with literary translation, ensure an academic promotion and, hence, make secure the university-based translation scholars at a higher social status and a stable financial status. Although literary translations have little market and economic value in China, they constitute one of the two ways to
maintain the social and economic status for the academic-based translation scholars. Non-literary translation practices have their high market demands, but they are not as lucrative as the teaching positions held by the academic-based translation scholars. The situation encourages translation professionals to hold teaching positions at universities, leaning further to the theory development for their academic promotion, turning to translation practices only as supplementary financial means.

One other factor not touched by the questionnaire is that the expansion of the college enrollment in China has offered ample and lucrative opportunities for college teachers, especially the foreign-language teachers, including teachers of translation, to teach extra hours both within their own colleges and outside at private-owned universities. This factor contributes considerably to the reluctance of doing the intellectually more demanding translation practices.

The institutionalized status of translation practices in literary genres and theories and the status of academic-based translation professionals become mutually supportive. Together, they form a career path that is, in general, quite different from that of the non-academic-based translation practitioners. This separate career path ensured by the prestigious social and economic status of university teachers, to some extent, prevents them from seeking for changes and endeavors to carry out the practices vital to the verification and renovation of theories; thus, literary translation has two characteristics simultaneously. On one hand, it has the height and power offered by its status to decide on its practices and its ways of development. On the other hand, this institutionalized status has its own belief of the right thing to do; therefore, new ideas and practices may not have easy access to it.
Politically, academic-based translation scholars form an audience that is different from the non-academic-based translation professionals. On one hand, because it is the university administrative body and faculty who have the institutionalized power over the subject matter to teach and other resources, it is only right to choose the administrative body and faculty as the starting place for technical communication to gain its disciplinary status. It is not students and how the teaching is conducted that determine the initial change of the academic structure in China, but it is how in general the university administration and faculty can be persuaded to follow a new perspective of viewing translation and how they can infuse new patterns of thinking to the existing ideologies of translation. In this sense, the administration and the faculty form the first audience to be persuaded the necessity of the technical communication transfer. On the other hand, because Chinese academic-based translation scholars clearly have their own beliefs about what constitute their major discourses, such as the preference of literary translation and translation theory research to other academic practices, it is important to find or change the approach of accessing technical communication in order for them to find technical communication as a possible continuation of the discourse and potential remedy to open up a more practice-oriented translation discourse.

Based on this understanding, we can offer some solutions to convince both the necessity and the possibility of the merger of technical communication and translation by showing new trends in the translation field and the possible functions of technical communication in solving the problems accompanying these new trends. Closely looking into the other participants from universities, I find that academic-based translation professionals also have different perceptions of what translators do and, therefore, what
translation is. For instance, as the participants answer what roles translators perform in the translation process, perceptions differ greatly: Jinbo Wang responds to the questionnaire that “the translator is and should be an active agent and effective mediator in the process of translation. It is the translator that makes or breaks the communication.” Wang emphasizes on this significance of the translator’s role by saying that “it is always the case, though some researchers are ignorant of it.” In this mediator role, the translator is perceived as a problem solver for smooth communication. Although the translator’s role is emphasized as both active and effective, it still indicates that both the readers and the original writers have an “essence” fixed in both the original and target languages texts for communication and reception. In other words, problems of translation are only caused by the differences of the two cultures. If the cultural differences can be found and solved, texts can appear perfect in both the original language and target language forms. In this perception of the relationship between the original and target language texts, translators are the solely responsible people for the realization of communication purposes, with the communication purposes being translators’ understandings instead of the expectations from end users in either culture. By contrast, none of the readers, end users, and audience is mentioned. Ying He views the role of translators differently: “It is my personal opinion that the reader plays the most significant role, and all the others are centered on it.” She admits that “there are arguments against this view, but many practitioners follow this view.” Ying He’s identification of the translator’s role has a lot in common with the conception and the practice of audience analysis and audience-oriented communication patterns. This view sometimes offers to change information in order to suit the communication purpose of the audience. In accordance with her role perception, she
chooses the option of “changing some of the content in translation” should direct translation fail to be understandable. This perception of possible changes of the content by the translator alone seems not acceptable by the literary translation practitioner Wang. In answering the same question, Wang chooses a way to authenticate a smooth connection between the original text and the translated version by “discussing with the original text writer to work out a plan for both the content and the form.” This emphasis on the accordance between the original text and the translated version, a tendency that literary translation scholars tend to have, seems to be the exact difficulty and the reason that Wang says he “does believe” technical translation (meaning non-literary translation) is “less challenging than literary translation.”

It is apparent that Wang views literary translation as a “purer” form of translation because it is “less urgent and expedient than pragmatic translation” and because the respect of the original form and content in literary translation has a regulation that cannot be found in other genres of translation. In this sense, the difficulties of literary translation incurred by the difficulties of finding equivalency between both languages to convey the meaning with little change of the content seems to be valued higher than the reconstruction of form and content in Wang’s translation theory. In this sense, Wang’s conception of the translator’s role as “an active, creative and flexible intermediary rather than a passive, derivative and vicarious scribe” has its limited activity, creativity, and flexibility within a large framework of constraints assigned by both the form and the content of the original text. Wang seems to emphasize this freedom within conceptual limitations as the specific role that translators should perform and cherish. His principle of translation manifested here is reinforced by the reluctance to make changes and by
viewing changes to original texts as failure, noted in the follow-up email: “In some rare cases, the translator has to draft and translate the original or, for that matter, write directly in the target language. However, in most cases, the translator is expected to respect the original, though in some cases he/she has the liberty to alter the original through consultation with the original writer.”

While Wang’s observation might be just an impersonal description of the translation field as a whole instead of his own belief; and his consultation with the original text writer might as well be based on the professional ethics of mutual respect and therefore shows more of the heritage of Chinese etiquette than of obedience to the absolute authority of the original texts, his perception that literary translation is more difficult and challenging indeed tells more about what is valued in academic-based translators’ perceptions of what translation is. The difficulties of pragmatic translation, or non-literary translation, are not viewed as being difficulties at all in his view, showing that in the conceptions of literary translation, non-literary translation has been othered to a degree that difficulties on that vast land, compared with those of literary translation, become totally unaccountable. Deep inside, this view reflects the one-sidedness of Chinese translation discipline construction, which has been recognized by translators who have noticed the discrepancies between pragmatic translation demands and the theories offered in translation academia.

In Wang’s perception of the translator’s role, the role of a mediator is clearly stated in contrast to a “scribe,” and the two form a dichotomy, neglecting pragmatic translation. This neglect of pragmatic translation shows the lag between the theory and the changed translation subject matter. In other words, if the theories were more practice-
oriented, then pragmatic translation might have been used, together with literary
translation, to form the dichotomy, instead of using a “scribe” as the opposite character,
who is difficult to find in real translation practices.

A similar pattern is observed by Xia Li, a translator and full-time instructor at
Ningxia University in Northwest China. Li responds in the questionnaire, “When I
translate, I bear firmly in mind the principle that a translator is a cultural mediator other
than a language transformer. His translation should be faithful to the original text as
much as possible, and understandable and acceptable to the target culture for the purpose
of communication across cultures.” Also, in this pattern, cultures are viewed as if they
can provide a definite answer to translation. The target readers as different individuals
within a general culture are not mentioned as the possible factors for the choices of
translation strategies, again showing the lack of recognizing and the lack of theorizing of
the present pragmatic translation practices which compose a major part of the translation
profession.

When I emailed the questionnaire to Xia Li, she was working on a 20,000-word
English-Chinese manual translation. She apologized for emailing me the answers back
late. Her connection to translation practices may be the cause of her substantially
different reply to the inquiry about new changes in the translation field, saying “in terms
of subject matters in translation, more and more contacts and agreements are translated
from Chinese into English, or vice versa.” Moreover, she points out “the change in
subject matters in translation is caused by the rapid progress of the economy.” Possibly
also because of business-based translation practices, she says “new tools and skills are
utilized because efficiency and effectiveness are most appreciated now.”
Also, the translation practices may lead to a changed working pattern.

“Teamwork has been the most common working pattern due to the considerable volume of translation and the limits of time.” In both of these two statements, what are clearly shown as being different with Wang’s perception is Xia Li’s recognition of the importance of time, efficiency, the use of new tools, and teamwork as factors affecting the ways translation is done. This recognition reflects a tension between the learned translation theories and the acquired experience in practice, a clear contrast to Wang’s view of pragmatic translation being less challenging, which totally others pragmatic translation.

Although I am not certain about the relationship between the translation practices and the teaching practices at Xia Li’s university, it is possible that her translation practices both influence and are influenced by the ways translation is taught at that university: “In translation pedagogy, students in my department may have an opportunity to engage in a translation task as a professional translator. From this experience, they can learn a lot, such as about what translation is, what a translator is, or how a translation is processed.” The practices of translating real business materials should have changed both the teaching faculties and the students’ view of translation.

While the similarities we find in Xia Li’s and Jinbo Wang’s perceptions may result from the same background on translation theories (they were both graduated from the translation program at Xi’an International Studies University), their differences in viewing translation practices and functions of tools and teamwork may result from their different degrees of involvement in nonliterary translation practices. Wang’s idea clearly shows that he feels the gap between the theories and practices; nevertheless, in practical
life, he is the one willing to continue to profit from this gap by adhering to the privileged academic level of the translation theory discussion and literary translation practices. His concentration on literary translation has its base on the gap and further widens the gap. By contrast, Xia Li’s more intensive nonliterary translation practice changes her knowledge of translation theory.

Hongmei Kong is another academic-based translation scholar teaching at Xi’an Jiaotong University. In the questionnaire, her view of the future for translation is very much influenced by mass media: “Translation in technical fields may grow fast in the future. Besides, as modern media appears and becomes popular nowadays, translation in the field of entertainment such as TV programs, movies and even web pages may grow. But translation for novels may shrink because TV or movies may be more interesting for most people. Reading a translated book is no longer the only way to know a different culture.” This view of the future of translation links the impact of mass media and entertainment industry with translation practices and, therefore, provides a future of translation based on the development of mass media and entertainment. Needless to say, there is enough coverage on both mass media and web design in technical communication. Blogs, bilingual or multilingual web design, information architecture, and single sourcing can all shed light on the difficulties felt by Chinese translation professionals. These conceptions that are usually regarded within the technical communication profession are being felt by translators who also have field experience, meaning that the rationale that the research and solutions provided in the technical communication field has general compatibilities. The topics covered and research done in
the technical communication field can well be steered into a generally acceptable way of thinking and doing things in the translation field.

To persuade academic-based translation professionals, technical communicators need to convince translation professionals that the differences of ideas of translation do not only exist between academia and business, but they also exist within the discipline of translation. On one hand, academic-based translation professionals need to pay attention to these conflicts because the changes have their background in China’s economic growth. They may as well seem to be usual differences between theories and practices and between academia and the business world, but the in-depth observations are needed to find the real reasons and the opportunities implied within. With this continual economic growth, the economic factors are bound to influence the existing academic structures and ideologies in both positive and negative ways. Even though the present expansion of the university system, to some extent, offers momentum for overall developments of different disciplines in Chinese universities, without a social structural and ideological change to face the translation problems made more apparent by the forces of economic growth and demands created by that growth, the tension between the theories and the practices in the translation field is generally felt by academic-based translators.

While at the universities, the differences of perceptions of translation may be manifested as different ways of doing translation and different degrees to view the influences to the existing academic structure, for some nonacademic-based translation professionals, translation seems to be viewed as being more of one of the many skills to be successful than being a profession in its own right. These professionals tend to view
themselves as professional communicators with strong abilities in translation practices, instead of simply translation professionals. The economic growth and the enterprise work environment may be the reasons for the changes in leveling the importance of their skills towards success. In China’s only employers’ organization, China Enterprise Confederation (CEC), a formal member of the International Organization of Employers, and a branch of the International Labor Organization (ILO), three translators participated in the survey. Xiaolan Zhu, one of the participants, notes in the questionnaire that translators in their organization are not only just translators but also persons who can combine the language skills with other professional work. She also notes that, as a rule, translators must translate original texts in accordance with the original meanings and formats.

But in practice, sometimes a good translator has to adjust the way of speaking according to the different culture in order to achieve better communication and understanding. She also mentions that to ensure the prosperity of the profession, translators should “1. improve the skills of translation, 2. learn more other aspects of knowledge and professional knowledge, and 3. understand the different culture in order to be able to deal with different types of people (italics added).” These three aspects, especially the third one that Zhu puts forward tells that in the business world, translators are not the people who can only translate, but should be the people who can carry out smooth communication first and foremost. To deal with different types of people in her enterprise context is an action to ensure that translators can gain a favorable social and interpersonal position and to navigate towards the goal of communication. It also seems to be a general application of audience-centered communication theory in a different
name. This participant seems to enjoy the favorable position resulting from this communication pattern. Zhu said, “You have chances to do some interpersonal communication through translating/interpreting. This kind of working pattern that I like more is drawing my potential of other aspects. Also the audience feels free to communicate with translators.”

Liwen Lou, the translation project director in CEC, says in the questionnaire that her main duties, which tell about the expectations of her organization, are “acting as liaison officer between CEC and international organizations, with responsibilities for interpretation, establishing international contacts, organizing international business conferences and seminars, and supervising and executing international exchanges and cooperation projects.” Translators, in her understanding, should “play the role of a medium for the smooth communication between writer and reader. More importantly, translators should try to make the speaker and audience understand each other well, or sometimes reach an agreement or get resonance.”

Although theoretically, she still adheres to the transmission theory of communication, stating that translators play “the role of a medium,” translation activity is clearly goal-driven—“reaching an agreement or establishing resonance,” which contains basic elements of audience analysis. Under this principle, the original text or speech can be modified to achieve smooth communication. In accordance with her understanding of the goal of translation in CEC, she thinks that she would offer to “change the text and then translate according to the target language culture to achieve the desired purpose of the communication.” This translation strategy makes a necessary shift of the original text
to ensure the understanding of the target reader, through which the goal of communication under the constraints of time and space is to be achieved.

Comparing the academic-based translation scholars with the nonacademic-based translation practitioners, we can also find that technical innovations are more readily acceptable in the business world. This does not mean that business world is the place to initiate technical communication transfer. This is because the long learning curve of some technical skills and the systematic theories are not likely to be financed by business. But the demands of technical skills and new theories leading real business practices to success can be conveyed to the Chinese academics to prompt the merger of the translation discipline with technical communication. With the disciplinary status of translation, technical communication would have more freedom in curricula arrangements, student recruitment, and research agendas.

These needs from business are also reflected in the answers provided by Jie Geng, a translator working for more than six years in the headquarters of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, the biggest Chinese telecommunication corporation. Geng’s needs for the translation practices are very practical. She says, “In the translation field, many tools have been introduced. The new tools focus on memory translation rather than machine translation.” She says that this change happens because “there are some repetitive parts within a product manual or among different product manuals. So the translation department wants to improve the translation efficiency with the help of new translation tools.” The “memory translation tools” mentioned by Jie Geng are actually the software designed for single sourcing. It is encouraging to find out that, in large Chinese business corporations, new tools bearing the latest developments of the ideological and technical
developments have been implemented into the work places. From these advancements, we can clearly see that changes in the business world can be used to let the academic-based translation professionals realize the big changes that are both happening in and reshaping the translation field.

Translation Theory Development

This approach is based on the fact that translation theories usually lean on literary translation and focus more on cultural issues than translation practices. As shown in the previous chapter, a comparison of theories in American technical communication and those in the translation field in China shows that in China, the practical guides of translation, especially pragmatic translations, are undertheorized. The possible reason for this partiality in theorizing can be that the high prestige that literary translation enjoys prevents academic-based translation scholars both from discussing the less authoritative topics of pragmatic translation and from engaging in pragmatic translation practice. Although some academic-based translation scholars do translate genres other than literary translation, the translation theories they use are either derived from literary translation or remain a practice of art, gleaned from the actual experiences. The possible opening for technical communication here is that if technical communication theories about practices can be introduced to the academic-based translation scholars, they might find new paths for theorizing their practices and find new concentrations other than literary translation. This widening of career paths offers them both academic opportunities for more publications and practical benefits of offering guides to translation practices.

Given the fact that translation theories and literary translation enjoy dominance in translation disciplines at Chinese universities, the introductions of technical
communication to Chinese university staff need to focus on the development of theories and the conflicts among the existing theories. In other words, on one hand, these conflicts, especially new practices of the translation field and new problems of the field that have not been covered and solved in translation theories should be emphasized to show the limitations of the current developments of translation theories and the noticeable leaning towards the literary translation and theory discourse construction. On the other hand, the different path of theory development and the relatively closer link between practices and theory development of technical communication offer a helpful alternative perspective for the academic-based translation professionals.

With the high rate development of the Chinese economy, the subject matters generated for translation and the strength that the Chinese economy has towards social and academic construction are bound to be felt within Chinese academies. The demand of the economy has both the function of manifesting the demand itself and the function of making the demand more important and more urgent for social and academic changes. It is quite safe to say that the demand will become, in the near future, one of the major influences for changes of the translation structure, changing the one-sided development of literary translation practices and theory construction. This conception needs to be both a method to reach Chinese translation practitioners and a conclusion that technical communication professionals persuade them to draw. Strategically, if some elements of technical communication can be integrated in the translation theory and discourse, that means technical communication has penetrated the translation academics and become an insider. Practically, attention should be paid to the following points for the reformation of translation theory and practices:
1. The First Audience for Technical Communication

The first audience for the introduction of technical communication in China is administrative staff and faculty, not students. Chinese universities have a top down hierarchy of power. The decision-making body is the administrative staff and faculty, who have different agendas and interests from those of students. Particularly, administrative staff has most of the decision-making power whereas the teaching faculty also has their say in the theory development and curriculum construction. When technical communication has not been established as either a course or a discipline, the attention should be paid to the decision-making body and to the agendas of this group. The emphasis on students, the very action of jumping ahead of teaching students actual details of technical communication is only secondary. In other words, without persuading the decision-making body of the universities, the success in technical communication teaching will be greatly reduced by the nonstatus of it. So, to persuade the administrative staff and the faculty is to reason out a path of development for technical communication in Chinese universities.

Specifically, the expansion of universities in China demands more disciplines to attract more students, a general academic situation to provide technical communication with necessary conditions to grow in Chinese universities. To persuade the Chinese university administrative staff, technical communicators can show the incentives created by the opening-up of the Chinese society and the growth of Chinese international trade and communication and show how technical communication, together with translation, can ride this tide of Chinese economic development better.
2. Differences of the Theoretical Emphasis in Technical Communication

The political hierarchy in Chinese universities is administrative staff, teaching faculty, and then students. The academic hierarchy in Chinese universities, with few exceptions, descends from theories to practices generally. Accordingly, publications are valued higher than the teaching experiences and the translation practices in academic promotion. Also, in publications, theoretical reasoning is viewed with higher favor.

Of course, in technical communication, there are more theoretical articles that discuss the theories of the field, like the histories of the field and the nature of the field. But the differences in the technical communication field, as compared with translation in China, provide enlightenment for practical theories. In Technical Communication for example, the methods of using statistics, interviews, and questionnaires to glean the theories from the technical communication practices and personal experiences of a project or a detailed description of situations inside a business or academic setting have a large share of all the articles published. Chinese translation theories still lack these methods of gathering new phenomena from practices. Showing practical value of these methods of theorizing can be a way to attract Chinese academic-based translation scholars to find an alternative way of transcending their personal experiences to new theoretical heights.

This approach has a practical advantage for the academic-based translation practitioners: By opening up this alternative way, the widened theoretical path will satisfy the academic-based scholar’s needs for publication for academic promotion. More importantly, it shows a way of using practices as the generating places of theories; thus, this practice may give the academic-based scholars more incentive to do more translation
work. The approach based on this line of reasoning may be better accommodated by the Chinese translation scholars.

3. Technology as the Supplementary Part

Even though the U.S. is known for its advanced state of sciences and technology, the introduction of technology to Chinese translation field still needs to concentrate on particular needs of the translation field. These needs include: the demands of the society for more practitioners, and for practitioners with multiple skills including not only translation but also adequate knowledge in writing, editing, designing, and desk publishing, etc. As these demands call for practitioners with interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, technical communication is an answer to that call. The introduction of technical skills needs to stick to these general trends. New technologies need to be introduced only after the general link between translation and technical communication has been established. The selection of the technologies needs to be based on the translation scholars’ interests. For instance, the software for single sourcing, for data base construction, for basic layout design, and the integration of machine translation and memory translation can be necessary for Chinese translation scholars.

Establishment of Exchange Programs

As non-native speakers of English, English teaching faculty in Chinese universities generally desire and cherish the opportunities to further their education in the U.S. and other English speaking countries. The exchange programs designated for Chinese faculty to learn technical communication in U.S. universities will appeal more to this group of scholars. The advantage of this approach is that with the change of locus, the power relation is also changed: In this case, technical communication becomes the
institutionalized power. It will have the force for the Chinese faculties to learn and reconstruct their knowledge structure and research methods. In general, the exposure to U.S. technical communication academia will help them find new paths for a merger of their translation knowledge and technical communication knowledge. Another big advantage of this approach is that the long-term learning (at least one semester) provided by exchange program should provide Chinese translation professionals enough time for the paradigm shift from Chinese academia to a merger of the two.
CHAPTER IV. BENEFITS FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

With the internationalization of global economy and technology, of world cooperation and competitions, challenges and opportunities are all viewed on the international scale. The benefits for U.S. technical communication field can be predicted by this general trend. Specifically, U.S. technical communication field can benefit in the following ways by establishing technical communication as both an academic discipline and then a profession. If technical communication in the global arena is viewed as a whole, then these benefits can be well adjusted into a huge global discourse. In other words, if we view the development of technical communication in different nations as part of the overall development, then the benefits of technical communication reach far beyond the borderlines of the United States.

A Ride of the Chinese Economic Tide

The high rate of economic development at 8.4 percent shows dramatically increasing demand for translation, as felt and expressed by the majority of the survey participants. Technical communication, through a merger with translation, can produce a work force better prepared for the demands in Chinese society.

More importantly, for U.S technical communicators, a group of professional translators with knowledge of technical communication means a better accommodation of information exchange between English and Chinese. First, the group has the deep understanding of Chinese culture and social practices. The localization of English documents can benefit from their translation in line with the theories of technical communication such as audience-oriented translation practices and multilingual text preparation. Second, compared with U.S.-based translation agencies, this group of
translators is available at much lower costs for translation, an adequate reason for outsourcing some of U.S. technical communication projects. Third, new patterns of cooperation may result from this cooperation of technical communication and translation. In Barbara Giammona’s article “The Future of Technical Communication,” the cooperation between Indian technical communicators and American technical communication creates a unique advantage in the effective use of time: Due to the difference of geographic locations, the working hours in India and in the U.S. have a difference of twelve hours or so. The technical communication documents can be drafted by Indian technical communicators by day and then handed over to U.S.-based technical communicators before offices close in India, the time the U.S. is about to welcome a new dawn; thus, a working pattern of twenty-four hours can be easily established. Analogously, the same working hour arrangement can be made between China and the U.S., offering larger margins for profit. With the wide access to the Internet in China, this working pattern is highly possible. More importantly, from this move of outsourcing technical communication to other nations, we can see generally more opportunities based on international cooperation which technical communication in any single nation cannot acquire otherwise.

A New Trend of Integrating a Market

Introducing technical communication to an economically promising land is highly strategic because in this land, the fast-paced growth of economy is forming and reforming itself at every minute. In this sense, the strategic importance of introducing technical communication lies not only in how much technical communication can benefit immediately at present, but more on how technical communication can help reshape and
integrate a market, business, and academic establishments to generate more potential profits for the profession. With the development of technical communication in China, more specifically, with the merger of technical communication and translation, a new market for the discipline may be gradually generated, therefore triggering a new social recognition of the discipline for the professionals both inside the field and close to it. In a long run, it is this changed recognition that will offer both technical communication and translation more profits and sustainable developments. So, the shaping and reshaping forces of technical communication as a brand new discipline is the strategic and long-term benefit that U.S. technical communication field really needs to foresee and cherish.

As I mentioned earlier, technical communication practices still remain unknown in Chinese society. If the merger of translation and technical communication can integrate a joint work force under a blend of theories and practices, then the common banner of the knowledge structure will surely open new career paths in Chinese society, reshape the knowledge construction, and reshape the distributions of social and economic resources.

A New Way of Viewing Technical Communication

As stated by the Barnum delegation, “Western-style technical communication, both in practice and in pedagogy, is probably not transferable . . . to Chinese contexts without alteration” (399). This observation has a necessary rationale that since alteration is inevitable, technical communicators may as well go a step further to advocate and generate changes that benefit the technical communication field. Hence, on one hand, the internationalization of U.S. technical communication is more precisely stated as localization of technical communications because of the inevitable changes that technical
communication should adapt to. On the other hand, on the basis of mutual benefit, the altered forms of technical communication in other nations with their respective national characteristics and identities will create more opportunities for international cooperation of technical communication.

In this sense, the localization of technical communication—the different variations of technical communication—are precisely the mode that the internationalization of technical communication can and should take. Viewing changes as inevitable and therefore helping generate positive changes, viewing different forms as inevitable and therefore set eyes on a larger scale—international cooperation—are the attitude that technical communicators should take.

Conclusions

In merging as a way of introducing technical communication in China, technical communication will acquire a Chinese characteristic that integrates Chinese socio-political and economic forces in Chinese cultural environments, a pattern that may be useful for technical communication to find developments in other countries. Since both technical communication and translation are discourses influenced by their respective socio-political and economic forces in their specific social environments, the merger offers a possibility for the two disciplines to integrate their strong points. The most important feature in maintaining a discourse is not to view what it has as the norm and guard against any changes in order to maintain its purity, its origin, or its present status, but to find new grounds for its possible further developments or shifts to better fit the changed environments. In accordance with this future-oriented view of development, technical communicators need to maintain a non-centralistic view and to look deep into
the other established entities to find threads for new and different connections. In this process, presumptions mistaken for knowledge may be more misleading than rewarding.

The merger of technical communication and translation is the result of a way of viewing the status of strategic power relations. This merger will open up an opportunity for technical communication to be accepted by Chinese universities. With the status acquired by this acceptance, technical communication and translation may construct a market place that reflects the strong points of the both disciplines. Since such a choice of introducing technical communication to China is in accordance with and is backed up by Chinese socio-political, economic, and academic developments, if properly conducted, this merger will both bring immediate benefits and generate more potential ones for the future development of the disciplines still viewed as two by many at present.
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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE: NEW TRENDS IN TRANSLATION

This is a survey to identify the new trends and changes in the translation field. As a translation professional, you are invited to participate and contribute your information. Please use a capitalized “X” to mark your answer. You can choose more than one answer or specify your answer in the space given after each question.

Your name will appear in the bibliography unless you wish to remain anonymous.

___ Yes, I wish to remain anonymous.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your current primary role in translation field?
   ___ Translation practitioner in a translation company
   ___ Translation practitioner in a business organization
   ___ Translation practitioner in a publishing industry
   ___ Freelance translation practitioner
   ___ Translation educator
   ___ Translation theorist
   ___ Translation educator and practitioner in universities
   Other: Enter your response here:

2. How long have you been in this field?
   ___ 1-5 years
   ___ 6-10 years
   ___ 11-20 years
   ___ More than 20 years

3. What is the name of the organization you are working for?
   Enter your response here:

4. How often do you translate?
   ___ A few times per year
   ___ A few times per month
   ___ A few times per week
   ___ Once a day
   ___ That is all I do

5. What is the primary way you stay current with changes in translation field?
   ___ Professional Meetings/Conferences
   ___ Professional Publications
   ___ Networking with Peers
   ___ Online Publications/Internet Sites
   ___ Books and Periodicals
6. Please provide in the space below a brief career summary. I may use this part to identify you and to attribute your name to your comments.
   Enter your response here:

SECTION 2: TRANSLATION PROCESS
7. Which of the following would you say are the most important to the success of translators? Select five from the list below and number your selections from 1-5 in the order of importance.
   ___Interpersonal Communication Skills
   ___Understanding of the home culture
   ___Understanding of the other culture
   ___Number of essays published in professional periodicals
   ___Understanding the Organizational Structure
   ___Translation Skills
   ___Translation Theories
   ___Number of presentations in professional conferences
   ___Computer Skills
   ___Understanding of different audience
   ___Teamwork
   ___Knowledge in a specific area, please specify______________________________

8. How significant a role does translation play in your company/industry/organization? Has that changed in the last five years?
   Enter your response here:

9. How have the computer technology and the Internet changed the way you perform your work?
   Enter your response here:

10. What do you think the translator’s role in the relationship of original text, original text writer, translator, presenter, and reader? Has the role been changed in recent five years? Or in your organization, is it just a different scenario from the assumption of this question?
    Enter your response here:

11. How often do you encounter the situation in which you think the original text won’t be proper in the sense of culture or won’t be understandable by the target language readers if directly translated?
    ___Never
    ___Under 10 out of 100
    ___11-20 out of 100
    ___21-35 out of 100
    ___36-50 out of 100
    ___51-75 out of 100
    ___75-100 out of 100
12. If you are asked to translate a piece that you do not think the target language reader will understand or the culture of the target language reader is so different that such a piece would not be proper if directly translated, what would you do?

___ Do what you are paid for and translate directly
___ Change some of the content in translation
___ Ask the original text writer to write it again
___ Offer to change the text and then translate according to the target language culture to achieve the desired purpose of the communication
___ Discuss with the original text writer to work out a plan for both the content and the form
___ Refuse to translate
___ Other, enter your response here:

13. What, as you see it, is the major cause hindering the development in the field of translation?

___ About theory, specify here_____________________________________
___ About pedagogy, specify here____________________________________
___ About technology, specify here___________________________________
___ About social status that translators have, specify here_______________
___ Other, specify here____________________________________________

14. When you translate, do you have any translation theory in mind as principle, or do you have your own developed guidelines in translation?

Enter your response here:

15. What is the most difficult part in your translation practice/research/teaching?

Enter your response here:

SECTION 3: FUTURE OUTLOOK

16. What do you predict the future for translation?

Enter your response here:

17. Do computer technology and the Internet create new grounds or new challenges for translators?

If Yes, how do you deal with the new grounds or challenges?

Enter your response here:

18. What is translators’ role in the era of computer technology and the Internet?

Enter your response here:

19. What can translators do to ensure that our unique role continues to exist?

Enter your response here:

20. What do you think is the most efficient working pattern?
__Individuals work on different sections of the whole project, and then the group compiles sections together.
__Individuals work on different sections, and then one individual compiles sections together.
__The whole group work on the whole project, and then the group compiles sections together.
__The whole group work on the whole project, and then one individual compiles sections together.
__Other. Please specify______________________________________________

SECTION 4: CHANGES AND CAUSES
21. Please detail the changes that you have felt about translation in your specific field. You may want to amplify on pedagogy, theory, daily work experience, subject matter change, new tools and skills, working pattern change, social-economic status change?
Enter your response here:

22. What are the causes of the changes that you defined in question 21.
Enter your response here:

My heartfelt thanks for your contributions!