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Language Teaching in Translator Training[1]

Abstract: In recent years there has been an increasing interest among translation scholars and practitioners alike in promoting translation professionalism and hence winning recognition for translation studies as an independent discipline. Many have convincingly and justly argued for the existence of a hardcore subject-matter knowledge for translation studies and have stressed the importance of this knowledge in the development of the students' translational competence. Unfortunately, in this attempt, the importance of language competence and thus language training is unduly played down.

This article examines this issue by looking at translator training in Hong Kong. It argues that the assumption of students L1 and L2 competence being adequate to study translation immediately upon entering translation programmes is unfounded and might be at least partially responsible for students' slow improvement in their translational competence throughout the programme. Key issues for strengthening language training for translation students are also highlighted in this paper.

Key Words: language competence, translational competence, translator training

1. Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s, emphasis in translation training and translation studies tended towards the cultural, functional and practical issues involved in the process of translation, in reaction to the linguistic approaches popular during the 1960s and 1970s. According to Malmkjær (1998, p. 2),

> This trend has brought a great many new and valuable insights, but, in the process, advances in linguistics and applied linguistics, together with the question of how translators might most effectively be provided with the kinds of linguistic skills which will help them produce socio-functionally adequate texts in the most economic, quality-oriented manner possible,

1 This article first appeared in *Babel: International Journal of Translation*, 47 (4).

have been left out of consideration by many translator trainers.

This observation seems to apply to translation teaching in Hong Kong as well. In Hong Kong today, it is often assumed that students have an adequate command of English and Chinese when they are admitted to undergraduate translation programmes. Courses teaching translation and interpretation principles, translation history and the like, are offered to students as soon as they enter the programme. Language training, on the other hand, is kept to the minimum and often left to other ancillary language teaching units. However, I believe that such an assumption of the students' adequacy in L1 and L2 competence upon entering translation programmes is invalid and thus responsible for the slow progress of the students over the period of their courses. In order to remedy this situation, translation programmes must provide effective, tailor-made language courses for translation students.

2. Necessity of Language Training for Translation Students

It goes without saying that bilingual competence is essential to translators. According to Neubert (1994, p. 412), translational competence consists of language competence, subject competence and transfer competence. It can be said that the importance of bilingual competence to translation students and professional translators alike is indisputable. However, in recent years, in attempts to promote professionalism in translator training, the importance of transfer competence (translation skills, strategies and translation problem-solving and decision-making abilities) has been rightly emphasized. It is almost a cliché to say that a competent bilingual does not necessarily make a good translator. Anecdotal instances are oftentimes cited to show how a bilingual person failed in their attempts at translation. While it is indisputable that the importance of transfer competence cannot be overemphasized, I would like to point out that in such an effort to promote the professionalism of translation and demonstrate to the public that translation is a complex and dynamic profession which has its own hardcore subject matter knowledge (Newmark, 1997), the role of language competence as a component in translation competence is played down unjustifiably. We translation teachers and researchers all know perfectly well how essential bilingual competence is to translators, but unfortunately we have assumed too much about Hong Kong translation students' language

competence. Meanwhile, we somehow forget that language competence is the most fundamental and the most important among the three components of translational competence. It is the prerequisite for anyone who wants to be a translator or interpreter. "There would be no grounds for transfer competence without the translator's thorough grounding in language competence and subject competence" (Neubert, 1994, p. 412).

In fact, translation students themselves feel the need for language boosting. In the time that I have been teaching translation in Hong Kong, my students, who were top achievers in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations (especially in English and Chinese), have repeatedly told me that they hoped to have more language training because they were aware of their deficiency in both English and Chinese. Almberg (1997b, p. 36) also observes that translation students "have self knowledge enough to realize that their language proficiency calls for much boosting". Besides, there is another reason why students demand more language enhancement. Many of the students are cognizant of the fact that they cannot all find employment as translators/interpreters or Chinese language officers[1] after graduation. Many of them will simply land jobs that are language-related or only remotely related to language or translation per se. Furthermore, there has also been a decrease in the number of translation posts in the past few years. Since the government has always been the biggest employer of translation graduates, the merging of some administrative bodies as a result of the economic downturn, for example, the amalgamation of the regional and district councils in 2000, will definitely affect the number of students who will actually be able to find employment as translators and interpreters. More students will eventually find jobs where they will simply have to use Chinese and/or English to perform their duties. Therefore to be responsive to changing social and market needs, a certain amount of language training for translation students will definitely enable them to be better prepared for employment.

Literature on translation teaching also supports the teaching of language for translation students. In her study on professional translators' perceptions of translation proficiency through data gathered from interviews with professional translators, Cao (1996a, p. 234) found that the requirement of a translator as a language expert in both the SL and the TL has been

1 Chinese Language Officer is the official title for translators and interpreters employed by the Hong Kong SAR government.

particularly emphasized by many of the informants during interviews. In Li's study on the needs of professional translators in Hong Kong, the respondents, who were also professional translators, considered language training most important to them and expressed the need for more.

> The respondents found their training in language in translation programmes was most useful to them at work; however, they also found their preparation in language at the university was not sufficient for them to do a good translation job; therefore, they hoped to improve their language if they had a chance to study again… the respondents seemed to have prized language skills and therefore language skills training over translation skills training. Whether or not such a perception is warranted, a clear message we receive from this study is that bilingual competence is most important to a translator and language training for translation students needs to be strengthened (Li, 2000, p. 34).

My experience of teaching translation in Hong Kong also tells me that students need more language training in order to be competent translators. I believe that what has stopped many translation students from fast improving their translation competence after three years of study is not their lack of training in translation methods and skills; rather, it is their inadequate bilingual competence. An analysis of some students' errors in translating can very well illustrate this point.

Recently, I gave the students in my commercial translation class an assignment of translating some sentences from English into Chinese and vice versa as a way to help them brush up their translation skills and strategies, as they might have become rusty after their long summer break. The following was one item of the translation assignment, in which they were asked to translate from Chinese into English.

(1) 你们村子上有多少人家?

(2) 他姐姐已经有了人家了。

(3) 这件事，我是听人家说的。

(4) 快去告诉人家，丢失的钱找到了。

These sentences should be very simple for second-year translation major students. All four sentences contain the phrase "人家". The purpose of this item is to remind students of the importance of context in determining the meaning of a word, phrase or even a text. The students generally considered it simple as well. However, an analysis of their translations revealed that among

the 26 students who translated this item, only three of them got it all correct. The first sentence was the one that the students did the best. However, some of them still made mistakes. One error that most students made was that they used households instead of families to translate "人家". Besides, some even used "have" instead of "there be" to translate "有" in this sentence.

(1) How many families are there in your village? (R)

How many households does your village have? (W)

In translating the second sentence, some of them misunderstood "有了人家" to mean "be married". But what really surprised me was that at least half of my students did not know how to use the word "to marry". Therefore, they translated this sentence into "His sister has already married" instead of "His sister is already married" or "his sister has already got married".

(2) His sister is engaged. (R)

His sister has already married. (W)

In translating the third sentence, some students used "from the others" instead of "from others". Others translated it into "from the mouth of others" or "through other people's mouth", which were not English!

(3) I heard it from others. (R)

I heard it from the others. (W)

I heard it from the mouth of others. (W)

I heard it through other people's mouth. (W)

In translating the fourth sentence, some students translated the first part of the sentence into "tell them fast/quickly", which seems to mean to say it fast instead of clearly, which obviously is not what the original sentence means.

(4) Tell them right away (that) the lost money has been found. (R)

Hurry! Tell them (that) the lost money has been found. (R)

Tell them fast that the money lost has been found. (W)

This brief analysis shows clearly that the reason for these errors was not because of lack of training in translation methods, since they all understood that the context determined the meaning(s) of the phrase "人家". Rather, it was because the students did not have the bilingual competence required

to complete translation of these sentences in correct and idiomatic English. Given the fact that the sentences were so simple and my students were top achievers in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations, the entrance examinations for higher education in Hong Kong, we as teachers should seriously worry about their language proficiency. Undoubtedly, in order to help them improve their translation performance, language training should be the first and foremost training that students receive in an undergraduate translator training programme.

There is still another reason why we should not assume Hong Kong translation students possess adequate bilingual competence upon entering university. For many, the basis of such an assumption is the years of learning English and Chinese that Hong Kong students undergo in elementary and secondary schools. The yardstick of their proficiency in the two languages is the powerful Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations. However, the grades of students who are admitted into the seven translation programmes in Hong Kong each year vary considerably. As mentioned earlier, being a teacher in a department of translation which has admitted the best secondary school graduates since its inception in 1995, I have found my students have a great deal to do to improve their bilingual competence. Besides, after repeated outcry concerning the declining of local students' English and Chinese competence, I believe it is simply wrong for anyone to continue to hold this entirely unfounded assumption. Further maintenance of it will only prevent translation programmes from producing quality translators. Therefore, while fully aware of the advisability and necessity to promote translation professionalism by stressing the existence of a hardcore subject-matter knowledge of translation and its importance in the training of translators, I object to doing so at the sacrifice of the quality of our graduates. Language teaching has to be part of undergraduate translator training programmes and should be strengthened.

3. Some Methodological Considerations of Language Teaching for Translation Students

3.1 Focus on Language Use

While learning about language is useful to the development of translation competence by raising translators' sensitivity to language, and to

a lesser extent their decision-making and problem-solving abilities, emphasis should be placed on the use of L1 and L2 in language training for translation students. "As translation is an action-directed activity, for a translator, to be competent in two languages entails both the knowledge including language knowledge, and the ability to apply the knowledge to actual translation contexts for communication purposes" (Cao, 1996a, p. 233). The difference between language teaching for translators and for linguists, according to Mackenzie (1998), is that language is a tool for the translator rather than the object of study. "The translator must be taught to use the tool skillfully and appropriately, which implies that teaching should concentrate on the use of the language in communication rather than on the language itself" (Mackenzie, 1998, p. 15).

3.2 Inclusion of Explicit Grammar Instruction

While stress should be laid on language use, some explicit instruction of grammar should be included in language training for translation students (Poon, 1997). This is especially important for translation students in Hong Kong, most of whom have learned English using the communicative approach, in which fluency is prized over accuracy. Therefore, on the whole, Hong Kong students do fairly well in oral English communication. They are much better than their mainland counterparts in terms of fluency and ease with which they express themselves in English. However, during the four years I have taught in Hong Kong, I have been constantly surprised by the disconcerting quality of their written English, and the discrepancy between their oral and written English. I suspect one reason accountable for this might be a misconception that English teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools hold about the communicative approach (Tompson, 1996). Many of them believe that direct instruction of grammar interferes with the development of the students' communicative competence in English and therefore should be avoided. Consequently, Hong Kong students can communicate effectively and fairly fluently in oral English but commit many errors in written English. On the other hand, in translation, especially written translation, both fluency and grammatical correctness form the essential tenets. According to Krashen (1982, 1985), knowledge of grammar can be exercised to monitor the output of the second language. Therefore, teaching translation students some grammar can be of great help with the reproduction, revision and editing of translated texts, thus effectively reducing the errors in their translations.

In fact, literature abounds with argument for inclusion of grammar instruction in second language teaching (Lightbrown & Spada, 1990; Widdowson, 1990; Lightbrown, 1991; Savignon, 1991; Schachter, 1991; Li, 1998a). Celce-Murcia believe that the communicative approach "has arrived at a turning point: Explicit, direct elements are gaining significance in teaching communicative abilities and skills" (Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1997, p. 148). However, it is equally important for teachers to bear in mind that the purpose of teaching grammar is to help students learn the language and to be wary of making grammar the main focus of their teaching. Also, alternatives should be considered for traditional grammar instruction, such as the grammar consciousness-raising tasks that Ellis and Fotos have been undertaking in Japan (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1994).

3.3 Enhancement of Mother Tongue Training

The importance of the mother tongue is often overlooked and thus kept to a minimum in translator training while more emphasis is laid upon the second language (cf. Bowen, 1989; Rose, 1989; Seleskovitch, 1989). In fact, it cannot be assumed that translation students always function competently in their first language. Enhancement of the mother tongue is just as important as, if not more than, that of the foreign language. This is especially important for translation programmes in Hong Kong, where professional translators need to use more Chinese at work since the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 (Li, 2000). Therefore, in our attempt and effort to enhance the overall bilingual competence for translation students, emphasis should also be placed on the improvement of their mother tongue (Mackenzie, 1998). As Lang suggests, "it seems to be highly desirable, if not essential, that any course in translating should be preceded by a monolingual text processing course, designed specifically to improve the trainee translator's mastery of his/her mother tongue" (Lang, 1992, p. 399).

Special attention should also be given to teaching students the difference(s) between Putonghua and Cantonese.[1] Many teachers have observed that translation students in Hong Kong often have difficulty in writing good Chinese. As Cantonese is the language they use in daily

1 Cantonese is the local dialect while Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) is the official and standard language used in the Chinese mainland. People in Hong Kong grow up speaking Cantonese, and thus most do not understand Putonghua.

communication, their way of thinking and way of expression are heavily influenced by that language. Therefore, when they translate from English into Chinese, one of the mistakes they make most often is that they translate into a mixture of Putonghua and Cantonese. Sadly, they often commit the mistake without even realizing it. I have had students confiding to me in frustration that they had always written Chinese this way ever since they started school and very few teachers had pointed out this kind of mistake to them. So what should be done then? A course of Putonghua and Cantonese Comparison and Translation as suggested by Cheng (1999) might be in order. Such a course will not only enhance students' awareness of the differences between Putonghua and Cantonese, but also provide them with training in translation and interpretation between these two dialects, a skill which is becoming more useful for professional translators in Hong Kong as a result of its more socio-political and economic exchanges with the mainland.

Some translation programmes do require students to take English and Chinese courses from other teaching units and departments, typically language learning centers, in their three-year study at university. However, entrusting language training to other teaching units, for instance, Chinese to the Independent Learning Center and English to the English Language Teaching Unit in the case of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, has at least two disadvantages. Firstly, the language courses offered at such centers are designed for all the students of the university. It is well known that the students in other faculties are in general far below translation students in their English proficiency (This observation is supported repeatedly by teachers at these centers.). Therefore such courses seldom meet the needs of translation students. Secondly, entrusting the training of language to other teaching units makes it difficult to monitor students' progress in that language. Teachers of subject-area courses are seriously disadvantaged in teaching without a clear idea of students' bilingual competence. Therefore, it seems much better for translation programmes to design and offer their own language courses to translation students.

3. Summary and Conclusion

The idea of language training for translation students is not original. But the point is that in attempts to promote professionalism in translation by emphasizing the importance of translation training, we are cautioned not to

downplay the importance and necessity of language training for translation students, especially for Hong Kong students, who themselves feel the need for more language training and whose translation work also shows clearly such a need.

To provide more language training for translation students in Hong Kong, we need to strike a better balance between language training and translation training rather than devoting all three years to translation training alone when most of the students do not have adequate bilingual competence needed to become competent translators. Instead of asking for more resources to set up new courses, we may need to restructure our existing curricula to allow for more language training. This is especially important today, when the economic recession has affected the Hong Kong government's financial ability to fund higher education. In fact, I have always suspected that providing one-year intensive training in English and Chinese to our students before teaching them any translation theory and skills might yield much better results.

In enhancing language training for translation students, emphasis should be placed on language use. However, a certain amount of direct instruction of both Chinese and English will be very helpful for students to improve their translation performance. Besides, enhancement of students' Chinese competence is just as important as, if not more important than, the enhancement of their English competence. Meanwhile, some attention to teaching Hong Kong students the differences between Cantonese and Putonghua will help them a good deal in their English-Chinese written translation.

All in all, translation students need to lay a firm foundation of bilingual competence before and while receiving their training in translation. Language training instruction well planned can help translation students improve their bilingual skills and in turn their overall translation competence and performance. Thus, it is an area that deserves more attention and research from those who teach and research translation.

Translation Theory in Translation Teaching[1]

Abstract: Research on translation teaching has for many years attracted attention of translation teachers and researchers. Highly at debate is the role of translation theory in translation teaching. This paper argues that one of the important reasons for the discrepancy in people's understanding of the pedagogical value of translation theory, typically between translation teachers and students, is that translation teachers have failed to enable students to connect theory with practice in teaching. Guidelines are then laid down for linking theory with practice in translation teaching in general and teaching theory in particular.

Key Words: translation theory, pedagogical value, connecting theory with practice

1. Introduction

Research on translation teaching has been gaining momentum over the last decade. Among others, the role of translation theory in translation practice and hence translation teaching has been an issue at the center of the debate. According to Gile (1995a), theoretical components in translation teaching can be of help to the trainees in three ways. They help them advance faster and further. They can also help them choose appropriate strategies and tactics when they are faced with new situations. They can help them maintain appropriate strategies and tactics rather than drift over time into less professional and less efficient ones under market forces such as financial need, client demands, or misperception of their work by third parties (p.14). Such a position is shared by many other scholars as well (see for example, Delisle, 1980, 1981; Gémar, 1983; Juhel, 1985; Larose, 1985; Newmark, 1988; Larson, 1991; Vinay, 1991; Viaggio, 1994; Friedberg, 1997). However, there are a number of people who remain very much unconvinced. They believe that translators are born not made (Nida, 1981) and that teaching translation theory has very little to offer to practising translators (Minford,

1 This article first appeared in *Translation Quarterly*, 11&12, under the title of "Relating Theory to Practice: A Critical Inquiry into the Teaching of Translation Theory".

1997). And students are in general very skeptical of the pedagogical value of translation theory. Many who believed in the usefulness of theory are often very much disillusioned after taking a course of theory. Translation theory is notorious among students as dull and impractical, hence students' resistance and disappointment with it. This has been detrimental to the teaching of translation theory. Finding out the reason for this discrepancy in understanding and laying out some guidelines for improving teaching of translation theory merits our immediate study.

2. The Gap in People's Perceptions of the Pedagogical Values of Translation Theory: One Explanation

Why is there such a gap in people's perceptions of the pedagogical values of translation theory then? Among others, one important reason for the gap is that we as teachers have failed to translate our understanding for the students. Many teachers may have known translation theory perfectly well (be it theory of their own or that gathered from reading others' works), but they have not found a good way to teach them to the students. Some may be excellent literary translators and translators of non-literary texts, but unfortunately they may not be competent pedagogical translators, that is, they have failed to translate the theory for their target audience — the students, so that they can not only understand but also internalize and apply it in their practice and eventually benefit from it. As a result, many students do not really know what translation theory is even after taking a course of translation theory, not to mention connecting theory with practice. Other teachers may be better in terms of presenting the theory but still they have failed to help students make the connection between theory and practice. Some may not have recognized this gap and thus have made no efforts in this connection; others may have seen this problem but unfortunately have not found the right strategy to help students. In consequence, translation theory and practice are for many students two separate kinds of knowledge and skills that can be compartmentalised and thus theory has little to offer to translation practice.

The teaching philosophy of some teachers might also have been partially responsible for the discrepancy in people's perceptions of the importance and usefulness of translation theory in practice and translator education. Many are still holding a positivistic perspective of knowledge and teaching. To them, knowledge (and thus theory) is what is written in the book and held

by the master-teacher, and thus teaching is to transmit the knowledge from the book or the master-teacher to the students who are all empty receptacles ready to be filled. In teaching translation, teachers usually lecture what is said in books regarding translation theory or their own theory of translation, thinking that the students will memorize all the rules taught in class and then automatically apply them in translating. In this sense, teachers are actually imposing their or other translation theorists' theories on the students and expect that they will apply intact the so-called theory in their practice.

However, as Gentile (1995) pointed out, students generally have difficulty in relating theory to practice.

> The students must often make a considerable leap in order to relate many and conflicting points of views about translation to their everyday problems in carrying out the process. (p. 61)

I believe that the cognitive process of students' learning and applying translation theory is much more complicated than many of us have assumed. Although there is no literature available on the cognitive process of students learning translation theory, some literature on second language acquisition may shed some light in this respect. In discussing how people learn a second language, Krashen (1982, 1985) made a distinction between learning and acquisition, which is known as the monitor hypothesis.

> There are two independent ways of developing ability in second languages. 'Acquisition' is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language, while 'learning' is a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language... Our ability to produce utterances in another language comes from our acquired competence, from our subconscious knowledge. Learning conscious knowledge serves only as an editor, or monitor. We appeal to learning to make corrections, to change the output of the acquired system before we speak or write (or sometimes after we speak or write, as in self-correction). (pp. 1-2)

According to Krashen (1982, 1985), there are at least three conditions for the Monitor to function, namely, sufficient time, conscious focus on form of language and sufficient knowledge of the language rules. Because these three conditions are generally difficult to meet in usual communication, the role of learning in second language acquisition is very limited while acquisition

now appears to play a far more central role than learning in second language performance.

Although Krashen insisted that "acquisition" and "learning" are entirely separate, and that "acquired" knowledge cannot turn into "learnt" knowledge, several researchers have challenged what Krashen refers to as the non-interface position and argue that "learnt" knowledge can be automatized and hence be available for use in spontaneous conversation (e.g., McLaughlin, 1978; Rivers, 1980; Stevick, 1980; Sharwood-Smith, 1981; Gregg, 1984).

It seems to me that a similar hypothesis can also be developed of theory learning in translator training. In translation theory learning, what students learn can also be roughly classified into two kinds, "learned theory" and "acquired theory". "Learned theory" is what students remember from class lectures and it is what they *know about* translation. This knowledge about translation can be used to monitor one's translating and translation product only when (1) there is sufficient time, (2) the translator focuses on the use of these rules, and (3) the translator remembers all the rules. Since meeting all of the three conditions is possible probably only in classrooms or in the case of individualized literary translation, but rarely in the context of professional translation, "learned theory" will be of very limited use to students as professional translators.

"Acquired theory", on the other hand, is the understanding that is developed by the students themselves about the process and methods of translation. It is the result of students' internal integration of translation practice and theory. It leads to students' *knowing* rather than *knowing about* translation. This knowledge is much more ready for application in real translation settings and is actually the most useful part of knowledge that the students can use spontaneously in translation. "Acquired theory" has two sources, what one develops in practical translation exercise or work and what is transformed from "learned theory". Students normally have very limited translation practice and hence the knowledge they acquire from it is very limited too, it will take too long a time for them to become competent translators if we rely on them to develop their own translation theory alone. Obviously, we cannot afford that much time. Besides, there is already a bulk of translation knowledge sublimated from the practice of thousands of translators, it is therefore possible, necessary and wise to teach it to the students. Therefore, although "learned theory" is of very little use in professional translation, it can be very useful once it turns into "acquired

theory" after being properly treated. We as teachers need to ensure that what we teach students in class will eventually turn into part of their own understanding of translation. Therefore, how to facilitate the transformation from "learned theory" to "acquired theory" is then crucial to the success of teaching of translation and translation theory.

To sum up, it seems that the following conclusions can be made about teaching theory.

1. Teachers must be cognizant of the gap between themselves and students in their perceptions of the pedagogical values of translation theory.
2. Teachers must recognize that one of the major reasons for the gap is their lack of understanding of students' learning process and failure to ensure the connection of theory and practice in teaching.
3. Better ways must be worked out to teach translation in general and translation theory in particular, of which stress on the connection of theory and practice must be the focus.

3. Suggestions for Improving the Teaching of Translation Theory

In order to improve the teaching of translation theory, better ways must be worked out. In this attempt, the following could be the first steps: careful selection of theoretical components for teaching; stress on the interrelationship between theory and practice; emphasis on the transformation of "learned theory" into "acquired theory"; modifying the goal of theory teaching.

3.1 Careful Selection of Theoretical Components for Teaching

In teaching translation theory, the first thing that we need to decide is what to teach. This depends on variables such as the objectives of the course, the teacher, student, and the teaching context. Gile (1995a) proposed two criteria for selection of theoretical components in translation programmes. First, "components should be directly related to students' needs. They should provide answers to questions and problems actually faced or liable to be encountered by the students and graduates, and should not contain more than can be considered useful to them." (p. 15) In line with this criterion, I would suggest that a differentiation might be made between macro- and micro-

translation theory. The micro-translation theory would mainly refer to the practical techniques and methods whereas the macro-translation theory refers to the fundamental understandings of translation, historical descriptions of language-related research, comparative study of different schools of thoughts on translation studies and the like. As undergraduate students are generally more pragmatic than graduate students, in teaching undergraduates, the micro-translation theory should be the focus, while the macro-translation theory may be reserved for more advanced students in graduate translation programmes. By doing this, we can ensure that what we teach to undergraduate students is more closely related to their practice, which will also help in maintaining students' interest and motivation to learn translation and translation theory.

The second criterion that Gile (1995a) put forward is that "components should be easy to grasp" (p. 15). He believed that theories should have a simple logical structure and require little acquisition of theoretical concepts and technical terms. The proper balance will have to be found between exhaustiveness and accuracy in the explanation of phenomenon on the one hand, and simplicity on the other. This is insightful. Quite often, we as teachers teach the same thing in the same way and at the same depth to students of different levels and with obviously different career objectives. For instance, in teaching translation theory, many of us teachers seldom make a distinction between undergraduates and postgraduates in terms of course content and its scope and depth. In consequence, undergraduates often feel intimidated and bored. Therefore, while considering the criteria that theoretical components should be easy to grasp, the teacher should also try to make a complicated theory easy to grasp and, better still, interesting for the students. Maintaining students' interest and enthusiasm, I believe, will benefit students a lot. For this purpose, the foremost important thing is first of all the teachers' commitment towards such a goal. Second, teachers may have to do some research in this area themselves. Since many translation teachers (and teachers of other disciplines with the exception of education) in tertiary institutions have probably never taken any pedagogical courses, we are somehow disadvantaged in teaching. But a commitment can help us move forward in our development both as a translator and translation educator. In line with this, we might consider running in-service teacher education programmes for translation teachers and should require that our future teachers take some pedagogical courses before joining the training

profession.

In the selection of contents for translation theory, we should also attend to the balance of domestic and Western translation theories. This is especially important for the third world countries, for example, China. As a result of the Western technocratic imperialism, people in these countries have developed an unhealthy attitude towards Western knowledge. They tend to believe that everything from the West is better than their own and accept indiscriminately theories of the West. One of the most obvious manifestations of such an ideology is perhaps in the field of teaching English as second language. First, many non-English speaking countries are really keen on teaching English to the younger generations while overlooking the teaching of their mother tongues. As a result, as young people become better at English on the whole, their proficiency of the mother tongues suffers. Worse still, many have not mastered either language (students in Hong Kong today for example). In second language teaching methodology, people like to jump on to the bandwagon of the communicative approach, forsaking their own methods that have been successful in turning out people with excellent English, despite studies reporting the difficulties and unfeasibility of the communicative approach in countries with English as a *foreign* language (Ting, 1987; Ellis, 1996; Shamin, 1996; Chick, 1996). Recently, some scholars have come to see the damages that such linguistic imperialism has done to the unprivileged countries and have written and spoken strongly against it (Phillipson, 1992; Swales, 1997). But what the ultimate results will be still remains to be seen.

Such Western imperialism has also affected the translation studies in many countries. For example, in China, one translation scholar asserted that translation studies in China lag behind Western countries by at least twenty years (Xu, 1996). Many translation teachers like to identify themselves with Western translation theories. Recently, however, some people have come to see the problem and insisted that development of translation studies and translation teaching in China must be based on mainly domestic Chinese translation theory since they are particularly addressing translation problems involved in English-Chinese translation. We should strive to understand Western translation theory and then adapt it for our translation study and practice, with the ultimate goal of enriching and developing our own translation theory (Liu, 1995; Dong, 1997). In this connection, in teaching translation to undergraduates particularly, local Chinese translation theory should have a focal place in the curriculum of the course. Of course, foreign

theories are by no means to be left out of the classroom completely; rather they, especially the important ones, should be brought into the classroom. But "much has to be digested and ruminated by the teacher before he could share it with the students" (Almberg, 1997b, p. 5).

In the selection of contents for translation theory, the teacher should include all major schools of thoughts and views rather than only those that s/he subscribes to. Since translation studies in its own right is still young and even the definitions of translation are so far inadequate (Komissarov, 1996), there are controversies over many issues in translation study. Teachers themselves may subscribe to different theories for obvious reasons. But in teaching students, it is only fair that the teacher presents the whole picture of translation theory to the students. Teachers should be up front with their own preferences and possible biases. Students, not the teacher, should make their own decision as to which theory or theories they subscribe to in studying translation.

3.2 Stress on the Interrelationship Between Theory and Practice

To achieve better results of translation teaching, we should also improve our teaching methodology. First, in teaching translation and translation theory, we must stress the interrelationship between theory and practice, that is, the connection between theory and practice should stand out in the pedagogy of translation. No matter whether the course is called Translation Practice or Translation Theory, the true issue is how to help students truly adopt and feel the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, how to help students develop their perceptual knowledge of translation practice to rational knowledge of translation theory, and how to help students internalize the theory by helping them make sense of the theory in the light of their practice and make sense of their practice in the light of the theory. The crux then is how to ensure that both theory and practice truly make sense to the students. This is the conscious effort we have to make as teachers as well as an effort that the students have to make under the guidance and urgings of the teacher. It is only after the students have had a taste of the sweetness of this conscious effort when they can take over from the teachers and take initiatives to make the connection and finally grow as translators.

Another issue that naturally arises in our effort to connect theory with practice is where we should start, theory or practice. Gile (1995a) noted that theoretical components "should preferably be taught after students have been

made aware of the issues, and if at all possible, after they are made sensitive to them" (p. 15). Almberg (1997b) shared a similar view with her argument set in the context of translation teaching in Hong Kong, that we should start with practice, followed by theory and then back to practice again (the PTP approach). While the argument is convincing contextualized in Hong Kong, I would like to believe that a procedure the other way round, that is, theory-practice-theory (the TPT approach), can also work with different students, teachers, topics and in different contexts. Where to start, top-down or bottom-up, depends heavily on the context of teaching. Also, if we look at the issue from a pedagogical perspective, a combined use of both approaches can actually add variety to the instructional procedures of the course and thus be conducive to maintaining students' interest and enthusiasm. Therefore, the real issue, as I see it, is then not that much where we should start but rather that theory and practice should not be separated in translation teaching. Furthermore, be it TPT or PTP, the interaction or interplay between theory and practice is not a three-step procedure but a multi-step, recursive continuum. It has to take place on an ongoing basis. In this sense, it might not be a good idea to offer translation theory as one independent course because of its implication that theory can be separated from practice. Also, the interaction between theory and practice has to happen on a cumulative basis, in the sense that subsequent teaching of theory and practice should not be isolated from what has been taught before. On the contrary, they should be connected and the students must be made aware of their interconnection, that is, the teacher should help students relate to the theory and practice of previous lectures in teaching new ones. As Gile (1995a) pointed out, "components should be recalled repeatedly throughout the course" (p. 16).

3.3 Emphasis on Students' Transformation of "Learned Theory" into "Acquired Theory"

In teaching theory, emphasis should also be laid on students' transformation of "learned theory" into "acquired theory". As pointed out earlier, since only "acquired theory" can be readily applied in translation practice and "learned theory" is not for spontaneous use unless it turns into "acquired theory" first, it is then crucial that we help students complete the process of transformation in teaching. How does the transformation take place? Four conditions seem essential, i.e., practice, reflection, continuity and guidance of the teacher. The first is obvious. In teaching theory, it is

impossible not to have students practice and test the rules of translation since the ultimate goal of theory teaching is to enable students translate better in practice. It is through much practice that students can gradually come to feel the power of theory and become skilled in applying it to the point that it naturally comes to them in practice without much conscious effort.

However, sheer practice is not sufficient for the transformation. What is more important is the critical thinking and reflection that accompany practice. In recent years, there have been more people advocating process-oriented training (Delisle, 1980; Martins, 1992; Gile, 1995a). Critical thinking and reflection can draw students' attention to the process of translation instead of the product or the product alone. It is through critical thinking and reflection that the students can find patterns in translation processes and methods and can either confirm or disconfirm the "learned theory". The "learned theory" that is confirmed through practice and critical thinking will then become part of the students' "acquired theory", which they then will be able to apply spontaneously in practice. This will also lead to the ultimate goal of having students develop a coherent unified theory of their own (Gentile, 1995).

Practice and critical thinking also have to take place on a continuous basis, hence continuity, the third condition for the transformation. It is obvious that it takes a life-time for a person to perfect his/her translation skills. So there is actually no end to translation practice. Also, reflective thinking should accompany all practice all the time. It should happen throughout the students' learning programme and extend beyond the programme since many of our graduates will only become mature translators years after graduating from the university.

My own experience as a student and teacher of translation tells me that students usually cannot complete the process of transformation on their own. Teachers' guidance and support are essential. Aside from designing practical activities for students and encourage them to practice and attend to translation process, teachers must also find ways to help them to be reflective practitioners. There are different strategies that can be used to help students get on to the practice of reflective and critical thinking about translation process and methods. One that I have found useful for this purpose is reflective journal writing, an idea adapted from teacher education in educational studies. Students are asked to keep a journal as to what happens in the process of translating a particular piece in terms of preparation for the translation activity, problems and questions encountered in translating

the particular piece and gains of this experience, etc. An experiment with this strategy by the author in the Chinese University of Hong Kong revealed that students generally found it useful in getting them to think about the translation process and felt much more confident in themselves as prospective translators.

3.4 Modifying the Goal of Teaching Theory

Another important change that needs to be made is that we need to modify the goal of translation teaching and teaching of theory. Traditionally, translation programmes are to produce competent translators upon graduation. However, this goal is usually difficult to attain for several reasons. First, the instruction time is limited whereas the contents that need to be covered in the programme are too much. Second, because of the nature of translating that translation skills mature on practice over time, it is really difficult to produce competent translators within the few years of the programme in the university. Third, the changing nature of translation tasks poses further obstacles for reaching the stated goal. In this era of information and technology, translators constantly have to face new challenges ranging from translation of new terms and contents of different disciplines to new ways of translation, for example, teletranslation (O'Hagan, 1996). There is no way to guarantee our students to be competent translators without further study on their part when they are posted after graduation. Therefore, while we teach students skills and methods so that they will be able to translate soon after their graduation, this can only be considered as the short-term goal of the programme. In the long run, we should stress the development of students' decision-making and problem-solving abilities, their interest in pursuing translation study and learning to translate, and the development of strategies to learn translation. The advantages of having this as the goal of theory teaching is that we do not need to worry as much about how much our students can do upon graduation, but rather we would focus on whether they will have the motivation to learn more about translation, and also whether they know how to learn translation when they are not studying in the classroom. If they have developed good critical thinking and problem-solving skills and abilities in the programme, they would be able to use them for addressing translation problems and hence help them with their professional confidence (Gentile, 1995).

4. Summary and Conclusion

Translation teaching is a relatively young area of study (Kiraly, 1995). Naturally and understandably, there is much to be desired. Complicated as it is, theory must be taught to prospective translators. However, in order to ensure the usefulness of translation theory for learning translation, changes must be made. First, in selecting course contents, attention must be paid to the usefulness and appropriateness of theory for target students. Second, the interplay and interconnection of translation theory and practice must be stressed. Third, translation teachers must make conscious efforts to facilitate students' internalization of translation theory lectured to them, and meanwhile encourage and help them develop their own coherent unified theory. Only when these changes are completed can we expect that the role of translation theory will be fulfilled and that students and practitioners will come to agree with us on the value of theory in translation teaching and practice.

Reflective Journals in Translation Teaching[1]

Abstract: This article contends that the reason why theorists and teachers differ from students in their perceptions of the role of theory in learning translation is the actual separation of theory and practice in teaching. To remedy this situation, teachers should be process-oriented in translation teaching and so are students in learning to translate. Students' internalization of theories from class and eventual development of a unified theory of their own are crucial to the success of translation teaching and the growth of student translators. It is further contended that such process-orientedness in teaching and learning is critical to the development of translation studies as an independent discipline. Reflective journal writing, an activity which is similar to diary keeping but stresses the writer's reflection on the experience apart from recording what happens during a period of time, is then detailed in a workable manner as a strategy to help students in internalizing in-class theories and developing their own theory of translation.

Key Words: internalization of theories, process-oriented teaching, reflective journal

1. Introduction

Literature on translation studies abounds in arguments for the guidance role of translation theory for translation practice and the interdependent relationship between theory and practice (Newmark, 1988; Larson, 1991; Vinay, 1991). Friedberg argues that "a translator who is not guided by a theory, a translator who is not interested in general principles, is but an artisan" (1997, p. 71). Many people have also written on the pedagogical values of translation theory. According to Viaggio, translation theory should be taught "at the university, where the theoretical rationale of the practical do's and don'ts is to be learned" (1994, p. 97). Gentile believes that "practice which is not informed by a theoretical framework suffers from the idiosyncrasies of practitioners, reduces the teaching of the skills to a

1 This article first appeared in *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 6(2).

regurgitation of recipes and the practice to a concern for the personal qualities and authority of the practitioner" (1991, p. 344). Such ideas are shared by many other scholars of translation studies as well (see, for example, Delisle, 1981; Gémar, 1983; Larose, 1985).

Despite many theorists' and translation teachers' arguments for the inclusion of translation theory in translation curriculum and the fact that translation theory does figure in some syllabi, "the usefulness of such theoretical courses is often challenged on the grounds that they are too abstract or remote from actual translation practice and are therefore not useful to students" (Gile, 1995a, p. 12). Students have also often complained that theory is not as useful to their practice as the teacher has claimed. They tend to avoid theory courses and courses with substantial portion of theory and opt for pure practical courses.

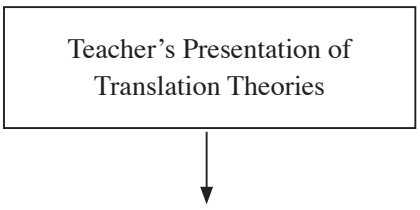
2. Students' Learning Translation Theory

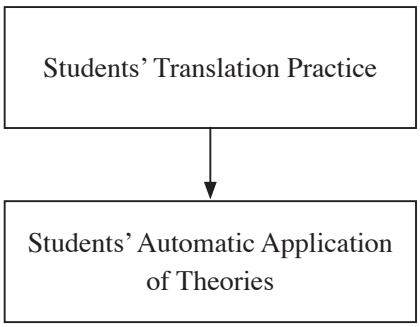
Why are translation students and teachers so different in their perceptions of the pragmatic and pedagogical values of translation theory? As I see it, teachers generally fail to convey to the students the importance of the theory in translation practice and pedagogy. Teachers do not realize that this is a potential problem, and consequently, their efforts are half-wasted. Many teachers do not properly understand learning process and assume that a list of reasons for the inclusion of translation theory in translation teaching will convince students.

Many teachers assume that there are only three steps from teacher's presentation of the theories to student's automatic application of them, namely these shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

An Oversimplified Model of Students' Learning and Applying Translation Theory

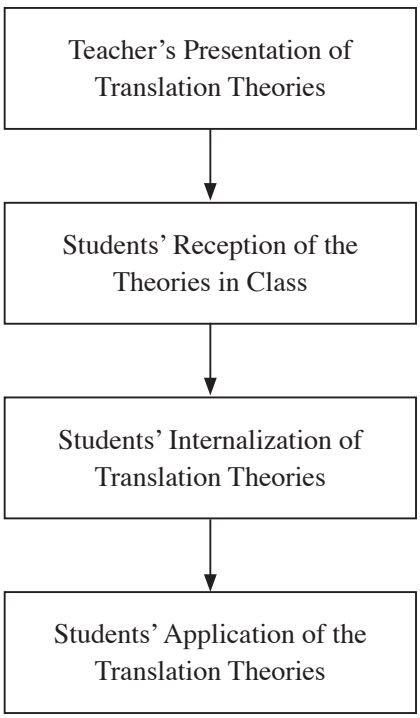




However, I believe that for students to see the usefulness of translation theory and then to automatically apply them in practice, they must first internalize theory. Students' learning consists of at least the following four steps: the teacher's presentation of theories, the students' reception, their internalization, and their automatic application of translation theory as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

A Model of Students' Learning of Translation Theory

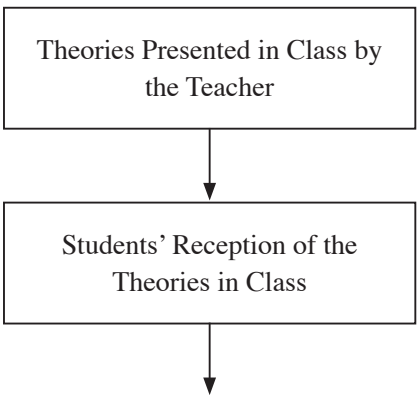


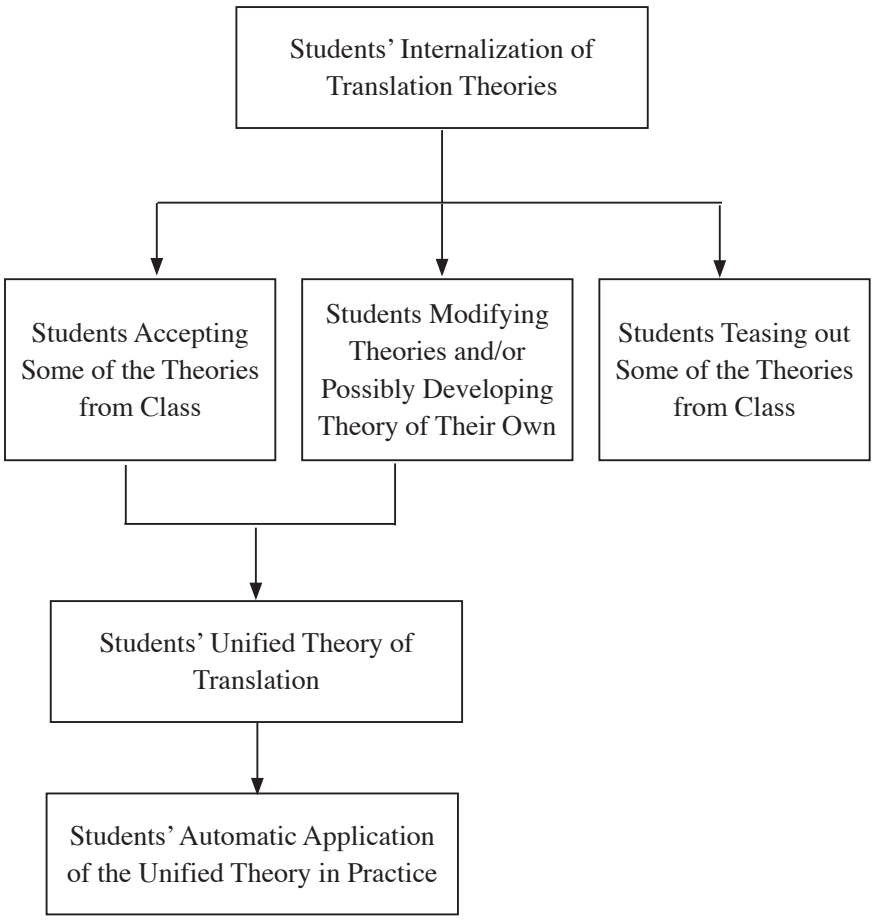
The central step is the students' internalization of the theory. The theory received from teachers is passive knowledge and only active knowledge of theory can help students in their practice. Research in teaching and learning has shown that students learn best when they use new knowledge in meaningful ways (Resnik, 1987; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1991; Leinhart, 1992). Instructional tasks that involve students in complex thinking process such as problem-solving, decision making, investigation, experimental inquiry or invention provide effective ways of engaging students in the meaningful use of knowledge, and thereby promote learning (Bransford *et al*., 1990; Marzano, 1992; Roth, 1990). Therefore, students' internalization of the translation theories from class calls for much more than the superficial product-oriented practice. It is the critical thinking and sense-making of the received theories that will assist the students in making them part of their active knowledge that they can readily apply.

Students do not accept indiscriminately all theory from class. In fact, they will only embrace what makes sense to them as future translators. In the way illustrated in Figure 3.3, students may possibly develop their own understanding of translation. Conscious criticism of practice and deliberate extrapolation of theory from practice will promote students' understanding. A fusion between theory and practice through assignments will lead students to conceptualize and theorize about their own translation and translating. A theory absorbed in such an internalization process will become their own theory, which they can apply in practice as professional translators.

Figure 3.3

A Model of Students' Internalization of Translation Theory





I believe that students' critical and reflective thinking can be promoted by means of reflective journal writing, a strategy that I have adopted from language teacher education. In the remainder of this paper I would like to explain what it is, how to use it in teaching translation, what are the advantages and what we need to be careful about in using this strategy.

3. Reflective Journal Writing

Since the early 1980s, reflective journal writing has been widely used in language teaching and teacher education as a powerful device to promote students' thinking and learning (Marzano, 1992; Wang, 1996). A reflective

journal is a diary recording what happens during a period of time. But it differs from an ordinary diary by requiring the journal writer's reflective and critical views on the experience. Thus journal keeping comprises two steps. In the first one, the journal writer records events; in the second one, he/she steps back and reflects critically about them. It is the latter step which contributes to translation teaching and learning, and thus the student translators' growth.

I introduced reflective journals in teaching Commercial Translation in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This is a practical course in which students must complete one translation assignment per lecture. As I was aware of students' difficulty in connecting theory with practice, journal keeping was introduced. At the beginning of the course, students were told to write a reflective journal for every translation exercise. The journal was handed in with the practical assignment. I explained the reasons and purposes for journal writing and how it would be assessed. I gave students some guiding questions which could be expanded on. These questions fell into four groups:

I. Comments about the session preceding the exercise

1. What did you learn in the last session?
2. What questions do you still have about the topic discussed in the last session?

II. The thinking and decision-making process of translating

3. How did you plan this translation?
4. What difficulties did you have in the translation? How did you solve them?
5. How did you choose between several selections?
6. How did you revise the translation? What changes did you make and why?

III. The translating act in the light of translation theories

7. What strategies/techniques did you use for this translation? Please exemplify.
8. Discuss the difficulties and gains in the light of the theory that you have learned.

IV. Summary of the activity

9. What did you learn from translating this piece?

10. What questions do you still have related to this assignment?

11. Did you like your translation?

12. Is there anything else that you think worth recording about this translation activity?

The first questions are meant to have the students briefly review the theories from the lecture and possible questions about the topic discussed. The second group focuses on students' attention on the process of translating the assignment. The third group probes the critical reflection and highlights the practice in the light of theory. The fourth group of questions summarizes the activity. As journal writing is new to my students, they were provided with a description of a reflective journal, its purpose, the guidelines and its use in translating at the beginning of the course.

4. The Advantages of Reflective Journal Writing

The first advantage of reflective journal writing is that it draws students' attention to the process of translation. When students are given a translation assignment, most simply produce a translation without using what they have learned, submit it, and then await the teacher's judgement and assessment of the translation. Their concern is to produce a so-called "equivalent translation", without knowing why they have translated the way they did. Like many teachers, students are product-oriented. By asking them to write a reflective journal on the translation assignment, they are required to focus on the process of translating. They are asked not only to express in the target language but, more importantly, to consider the ways in which they translate, they structure the translation, they make the choices, and the gains and loses in every decision they make. They are encouraged to consciously meditate on what they did and to judge the appropriateness of choices and changes in their translations and to assess the quality. Thus the development of their problem-solving and decision-making abilities is in focus of the activity (Wilss, 1996).

The second advantage is that students experience how theory learned in class can inform their decision making in translation. As a result, they

can internalize theory, taking in what they consider meaningful and useful, develop their own ideas about translation and finally combine them into an organic whole of translation theory which they can apply in subsequent translation activities.

Considering the fact that Translation Studies is still young, and there are controversies over most fundamental issues in this field, it is all the more important to give student translators the possibility of critically absorbing theory and of developing their own theory of translation. After all, they are tomorrow's translators and possibly translation theorists. Their awareness of problem-solving and decision-making is essential to the future of Translation Studies.

A by-product of journal keeping is that teachers can often identify students' problems with a particular topic or in specific translation assignments. This enables teachers to address them more effectively and efficiently.

Reflective journal writing also provides a channel for student-teacher communication. With dozens of students in a class, it is hard for individual students to ask questions. The reflective journals allow them to pose questions in their journal. By reading students' journals, the teacher can select typical questions and address these in class. For individual problems, teachers can arrange a meeting with the student or respond in writing in the margins of journal. In my experience, students appreciate these venues of communication. It also enabled me to tailor the course to the students' needs.

In addition, reflective journals are also good reference points for students. They can read their journals at leisure and see what problems they have had in learning translation and what progress they have made over the course. Reflective journal writing, can be also of great help to a translator's life-long education and continual professional growth in the rapidly developing field of translation. They learn to keep up to date with the newest knowledge in translation.

Last but not least, reflective journals also provide opportunities for students to improve their proficiency and writing skills in their mother tongue and their target language. The importance of the language proficiency in both the source and target language and the disconcerting reality of students' inadequate mastery of both have been widely recognized in literature of translation teaching. Through the continual writing involved in journal keeping, students improve their mother tongue writing skills, or their writing skills in the target language (English in the case of my students) when they write journals in the target language as most of my students do.

5. Caveats

Teachers must be careful about their handling of reflective journals as a tool for teaching translation. First, there is an ethical consideration. Since the students' journals are to be read by the teacher, students must be told to write only what they feel comfortable about having the teacher read. Also, the teacher should refer to information from journals in such a way that the writer will not be identified. The teacher must be factual, and take care not to make students feel intimidated, which may then lead to reluctance to include interesting and informative ideas, thoughts and experiences. The reflective journals should focus on the academic work and should probably not include personal incidents.

It is important that the teacher actually reads the journals. The teacher's response need not be limited to students' questions. The teacher can comment on anything in the response to students' journals. This will turn the seemingly uni-directional journal writing into an interactive experience. In addition, students will be delighted to find that the teacher does read their journals and will therefore be motivated to continue to write journals.

I would also suggest that teachers do not grade students' journals as long as students hand in a reasonable entry. On the other hand, in order to make sure that they do so and thus demonstrate awareness of the process of translating the assignment, they can get a grade for the assignment as a whole.

6. Summary

In sum, I have argued that teachers' conceptions about how students learn translation theory and the consequent inefficient assistance to students in connecting theory with practice often makes students reject translation theory in pedagogics and in practice. To correct this imbalance, I propose that emphasis should be laid upon students' internalization of in-class translation theory and on the development of their own theories of translation in which they will eventually blend translation theories into one organic systematic theory which is meaningful and ready-to-apply for them. Reflective journal is one strategy to this end for the promotion of independent thinking and for ensuring that proper attention be given to the process of translation.

Making Translation Testing More Teaching-oriented[1]

Abstract: Despite the fact that translation teaching research has been gaining momentum over the last two decades, little has been written and therefore known about translation assessment in the teaching context. This article reports on a data-based empirical study of translation testing in China. The issues raised in it range from teachers' attitudes towards testing to its objectives, design, contents, frequency, and its pedagogical roles. It is suggested that more research be done on translation testing, of which the first task is to develop a theoretical framework to provide guidance for translation testing practice and research. It is further recommended that translation testing be made more teaching-oriented and brought closer to the real world of professional translation.

Key Words: translation testing, teachers' attitudes towards testing, design of translation tests, pedagogical roles of translation tests

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of studies on translation and interpretation (Gile, 1995a; Fan, 1997). Among others, the pedagogy of translation has received unprecedented attention worldwide, including the Chinese-English translation research community, since the early 1990s. With translator training gaining prominence, translation assessment and testing[2] have been naturally incorporated as an integral part of the educational environment (Cao, 1996b). While there has been a wealth of research on translation teaching methodology and development of teaching materials, study on translation testing and assessment can scarcely be found (Mason, 1987; Ghonsooly,

1 This article first appeared in *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 50(1), under the title of "Making Translation Testing More Teaching-oriented: A Case Study of Translation Testing in China".

2 This article is mainly concerned with testing in the teaching context, and it is therefore different from other obviously competence-based translation tests, such as accreditation and licensing tests, though they may share some common issues. In addition, we are less interested in system-wide assessment than in the use of assessment by teachers in their classrooms.

1993; Xu, 1998). This lack of research has resulted in (1) translation testing lagging behind the progress of teaching methodology and material development, hence its incompatibility with them, (2) students' complaints about the current practice of translation assessment (as revealed in a survey conducted by the Department of Translation, CUHK, in 1998), and (3) most importantly, teachers' little knowledge of new development in educational measurement and language testing and thus their lack of understanding of possible alternatives of translation testing.

To change this situation, a critical inquiry into translation testing and assessment seems to be in order. In early 2000, we started a research project on translation testing at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the purpose of which was to make a critical investigation of the current practices of translation assessment, and meanwhile, drawing on the research on educational measurement in general and language testing in particular, explore alternative methods of assessment that could better determine students' translation competence and which would also be more teaching-oriented.

Three research questions were developed to guide the project.

1. What is the current situation of translation testing and assessment?
2. How can research on educational measurement in general and language testing in particular inform translation testing and assessment?
3. What alternative methods of assessment are available to teachers in order to improve translation testing and assessment?

It was also decided that the project would be divided into two phases, with Phase One focusing on understanding the current practices of translation testing and assessment and Phase Two on alternative methods of translation testing and assessment. The present paper is a report of the preliminary findings of Phase One.

2. The Study

2.1 The Design

Phase One of the project consisted of two parts. The first part of the study was a questionnaire survey administered to translation instructors at tertiary institutions in China. In formulating interview questions, I followed Denzin's (1970) suggestions and made sure that the questions were clear,

precise and motivating. The questionnaire comprised 27 questions altogether, falling into three parts, namely Personal Information, Teaching Context and Practices & Perceptions of Translation Testing and Assessment. The questionnaire included both open-ended questions and questions with fixed alternatives. One hundred and seventy questionnaires were mailed out and 95 completed questionnaires returned, a return rate of 55.9 percent.

As Cheung *et al*. pointed out in their study of professional translation in Hong Kong, "while its conciseness makes it a convenient method of sampling straightforward facts and opinions, the resulting data usually cannot reveal actual social processes at work" (1993, p. 13). Therefore, following the questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews were held with 12 of the respondents to further explore their understanding of being translation teachers, perceptions of translation testing and assessment, and their suggestions for changes in translation testing. Special attention was given to probing their perceptions of translation testing that were not reflected or captured in the questionnaire survey.

The interviews used in this study were semi-structured, which is conducted in a systematic and consistent order, but allows the interviewer sufficient freedom to digress and probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions (Berg, 1989, p. 17). All interviews, lasting from one to two hours, were audiotaped and transcribed as soon as possible afterwards.

2.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis is not a simple description of the data collected but a process by which the researcher can bring interpretation to the data (Powney & Watts, 1987). The themes and coding categories in this study emerged from an examination of the data rather than being determined beforehand and imposed on the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The researcher, following the strategy of analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), repeatedly read through the completed questionnaires and the interview transcripts during and after the study. In this process, recurrent themes and salient comments were identified and noted for the final report.

2.3 Participants of the Study

The respondents of the questionnaire survey were 95 translation teachers in tertiary institutions in the Chinese mainland. Thirty-one of them were in their forties (32.6%), 29 in their thirties (30.5%), 23 in their fifties (24.2%), 11 above

sixty (11.6%) and one below 30 (1.1%). Seventy-six of them were male (80%) and only 19 of them were female (20%). Forty-two of them were BA holders (44.2%), 46 MA holders (48.4%) and seven Ph.D. holders (7.4%). Their years of teaching translation varied from two to forty-five years, with an average of approximately 11 years and half. At the time of the study, 28 of them (31.8%) had taught translation for six to ten years, 21 (23.8%) for two to five years, 19 (21.5%) for 11 to 15 years, 16 (18.2%) for 16 to 20 years, and four (4.7%) for over 20 years. A summary of the information is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Background of the Respondents

Background	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age Group		
30 and below	1	1.1%
31-40	29	30.5%
41-50	31	32.6%
51-60	23	24.2%
61 and above	11	11.6%
Sex		
Male	76	80%
Female	19	20%
Education		
B.A.	42	44.2%
M.A.	46	48.4%
Ph.D.	7	7.4%
Years of Teaching		
1-5	21	23.8%
6-10	28	31.8%
11-15	19	21.5%
16-20	16	18.2%
21 and above	4	4.7%

In selecting interview informants, I, following Patton's "maximum variation sampling" (in Lincoln & Guba, 1986a, p. 200), allowed for maximum variation in informants' age, sex, teaching experience, teaching contexts, and the grades they taught.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. Participating teachers were informed about the study, why it was done and what would happen to the results of the study. They were also given an opportunity to ask questions and to offer suggestions. The anonymity and confidentiality of the study were emphasized. Also the right to choose to be part of the study or not and the right to opt out at any time during the study were discussed. Consent forms restating this information were signed before the study began.

2.5 Setting for the Study

Before going to the findings of the study, it is necessary to give an account of the research setting, i.e., the context of translation teaching in China, in order to situate our discussions.

Universities in China are based on a four-year system. Translation courses are offered usually in the third and fourth year in many tertiary institutions. Forty-five of the 95 surveyed teachers reported that their students were usually fourth-year students (47.4%), thirty-seven teachers reported that their students were mainly third-year students (38.9%), nine teachers reported that their students were second year students (9.5%), and four teachers reported that their students were first year students (4.2%) (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Students Enrolled in Translation Courses

Students	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1st year students	4	4.2%
2nd year students	9	9.5%
3rd year students	37	38.9%
4th year students	45	47.4%

In the Chinese mainland, there is up till now only one translation department and one school of translation and interpretation, the former at the undergraduate level while the latter at the postgraduate level. Almost all translation courses or programmes are offered by departments of English or departments of foreign languages. Only a small number of universities offer MAs and PhDs in translation. Among the surveyed teachers, 43 were teaching in departments of English (45.2%), 47 in departments of foreign languages (49.5%) and five in departments of French, Russian or German (5.3%) in different universities (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Respondents' Teaching Departments

Departments	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Dept. of English	43	45.2%
Dept. of foreign languages	47	49.5%
Dept. of French/Russian/German	5	5.3%

Translation, though a compulsory element, is only allocated two to four hours per week for one to four consecutive teaching terms. Among the 95 surveyed teachers, 49 teachers reported that translation was taught for two hours per week (51.6%), 34 teachers reported that translation was taught four hours per week (35.8%), and six teachers reported that translation was taught for three hours per week (6.3%) and six other teachers reported that translation was taught for one hour per week (6.3%) in their respective universities (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Number of Weekly Instructional Hours

No. of Hours	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	6	6.3%
2	49	51.6%
3	6	6.3%
4	34	35.8%

Among the 95 surveyed teachers, 50 teachers reported that translation was taught for two terms during the four year programme (52.6%), 25 teachers reported that translation was taught for only one term (26.3%), nine teachers reported that translation was taught for four terms (9.5%), four teachers reported that translation was taught for three terms (4.2%), and seven teachers reported that the instruction time varied depending on availability of teachers (7.4%) (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Number of Teaching Terms

No. of Terms	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	25	26.3%
2	50	52.6%
3	4	4.2%
4	9	9.5%
Undetermined	7	7.4%

In most cases, translation was taught as another skill in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing in English or other foreign languages. 77 of the surveyed teachers (81%) reported that the translation courses they taught were one or several of the courses that English or other foreign language major students must take in their programmes, 15 teachers reported that the translation courses were one or several of the courses that translation major students must take in their programmes (15.8%), and three teachers said that the translation courses were one or several of the courses that non-foreign language and non-translation major students must take in their programmes.

Students take translation courses for different reasons. In most universities, students majoring in foreign languages are required to take translation courses. Translation is one of the sections in most national foreign language examinations, such as the Test for English Majors (TEM) for English major students and College English Test (CET) for non-English major students. 66 of the surveyed teachers cited curriculum requirement

as the reason for students taking translation courses (69.5%). Another reason was more pragmatic, that is, to become translators after graduation. 40 respondents referred to this as the reason for students taking the course (42.1%). The third reason why students took translation was to learn a foreign language well. Translation was regarded as an effective way to help with learning and acquisition of a second language. 58 respondents reported that their students took the course for the purpose of improving their overall competence in the second language (69.5%). Four respondents reported that students took translation because they were interested in the subject (4.2%) (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Students' Purposes for Taking Translation

Purposes	No. of Respondents	Percentage
To become translators	40	42.1%
To improve overall language competence	58	61%
To fulfill programme requirements	66	69.5%
Personal interest	4	4.2%

Students taking translation courses worked at different jobs after graduation. 62 surveyed teachers reported that some of their students became English or other foreign language teachers in tertiary institutions (65.3%); 45 teachers reported that some of their students became professional translators (47.4%); 37 teachers reported that some of their students became English or other foreign language teachers in secondary or elementary schools (38.9%); 30 teachers reported that some of their students became scientists and engineers (31.6%); 15 teachers reported that some of their students became management personnel in foreign investment companies or government offices dealing with foreign affairs and international relations (9.5%) (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7
Students' Occupation after Graduation

Occupations	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Foreign language teachers in tertiary institutions	62	65.3%
Professional translators	45	47.4%
Foreign language teachers in secondary and elementary schools	37	38.5%
Scientists and engineers	30	31.6%
Managerial and administrative personnel	15	9.5%

3. Findings of the Study

As the result of my going through the completed questionnaires and the interview scripts repeatedly, the following emerged as the major themes.

3.1 The Importance of Translation Testing

The participants of the study were overwhelmingly in support of the present study on translation testing and considered it very important and worthwhile. When asked how important they thought translation testing was in the teaching of translation, 52 respondents rated it very important (54.7%), 37 respondents rated it extremely important (38.9%), four respondents rated it important (4.2%), and one respondent each rated it unimportant and not important at all (1.1%) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8
Importance of Translation Testing

Scale	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely important	37	38.9%
Very important	52	54.7%
Important	4	4.2%
Unimportant	1	1.1%
Not important at all	1	1.1%

3.2 Role of Testing in Translation Teaching

What role should testing play in translation teaching? 80 respondents thought that the purpose of testing was to assess students' translation competence, or to put it simply, how well students could translate up to the time of being tested. 44 respondents believed that the purpose was to find out how well students had mastered course contents. 14 teachers reported that the purpose was to fulfill the teaching requirement, that is, to assign students grades for the course. Three teachers believed that testing itself was to help students improve their translation competence. However, according to the respondents, they usually had more than one purposes for a test. In fact, most respondents reported more than one purposes for testing (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9
Role of Testing in Translation Teaching

Purpose of Testing	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To find out how well students have mastered course contents	44	46.3%
To find out students' translation competence	80	84.2%
To assign students grades	14	14.7%
To help students improve translation competence	3	3.2%

3.3 Frequency of Translation Testing

The respondents also reported on the frequency of translation testing in a translation course they taught. They were told to refer to one typical translation course they were teaching if they were teaching more than one translation courses at the time of this research. Although a huge fluctuation was seen in the frequency at which translation tests were conducted across universities, ranging from nil to 38 tests and examinations per term, 53 teachers reported that they gave around one to three tests per term (55.8%), that is, they either gave a mid-term and a final test or simply a final test at the end of the course. Only 16 teachers reported that they gave four to six tests per term (16.8%). 14 teachers reported that they gave seven or more tests per term (14.7%). Seven teachers did not give tests but only asked students to write term papers on translation which were used as the basis for assigning them grades (7.4%) (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Frequency of Testing

Number of Tests Per Term	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1-3	53	55.8%
4-6	16	16.8%
7 and up	14	14.7%
Paper	7	7.4%
Missing	5	5.3%

3.4 Questions Used in Translation Tests

In the survey, the respondents were asked to tick from a list the kinds of questions that they had used in translation tests. The questions they used fell into four groups: questions on knowledge and theory of translation, translating sentences, translating passages and translation criticism (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11
The Kinds of Questions Used in Translation Testing

Questions	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Knowledge and Theory of Translation		
Fill-in blanks	30	31.6%
Multiple-choice questions	20	21.1%
Translation of Sentences		
Multiple-choice questions	29	30.5%
To translate sentences	56	58.9%
To translate sentences using specified strategies	34	35.8%
Translation of Passages		
To translate a passage/ passages	89	93.7%
Translation Criticism		
To make right-or-wrong choice and give reasons	28	29.5%
To compare translations and give reasons	36	37.9%
To identify and correct errors	40	42.1%
To critique a translation	41	43.2%

The respondents were also requested to report on the test questions that they had used but were not listed in the questionnaire, the results of which are tabulated in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12
Other Kinds of Questions Used in Translation Testing

Questions	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Knowledge and Theory of Translation		
Question and answers	19	20.0%
Term papers	18	18.9%
Practical Translation		
To translate sentences into more than one version	12	12.6%
To translate a text for one or more specified readership groups	11	11.6%
To translate missing parts in sentences (cloze test)	14	14.7%
To translate missing parts in paragraphs (cloze test)	19	20.0%
To translate a whole text	24	25.3%
To translate idioms and set phrases	14	14.7%
To identify strategies used in translations	11	11.6%
Translation Criticism (passages)		
To make right-or-wrong judgement and state reasons	14	14.7%
To compare translations and state preferences and reasons	14	14.7%
To identify and correct errors	16	16.8%

3.5 Satisfaction with Current Translation Testing

As shown in Table 4.13, 73 respondents reported that they were generally dissatisfied with the current situation of translation testing (76.8%). Seven teachers were extremely dissatisfied with the situation (7.4%) while 10 teachers reported that they found the present situation satisfactory (10.5%). One teacher considered the current situation extremely satisfactory.

Table 4.13

Satisfaction of Respondents

Scale	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfactory	1	1.1%
Very satisfactory	0	0
Satisfactory	10	10.5%
Very unsatisfactory	73	76.8%
Extremely unsatisfactory	7	7.4%
Missing	4	4.2%

4. Discussions

4.1 Attitudes towards Translation Testing

The respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of this study on translation testing, in the form of active participation by completing and returning the questionnaires and offering encouraging comments. The respondents attached great importance to testing. Over ninety percent of the respondents believed that translation testing is important or extremely important and deserves much more attention than it has received so far. Two reasons might be accountable for the lack of study on translation testing despite its recognized importance. First, testing and assessment have always been difficult in almost all educational contexts. For instance, one hurdle for the highly-acclaimed Communicative Approach in second/foreign language education has been the difficulty in assessing learners' communicative competence which the method claims to develop. As a result, this approach has been considerably limited in its application in many ESL/EFL situations

(Li, 1998a). Likewise, translation testing is also much more difficult and complicated compared with other aspects of translation teaching. It is thus understandable that there has been little study on this topic so far. Secondly, translation teaching research is obviously very young (Kiraly, 1995). Therefore, it is predictable that studies on the topic of translation testing are yet to come.

The teachers were also concerned about the current practice of translation testing. Over eighty percent of the respondents reported that they were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the current situation. But due to lack of study and little exchange of ideas, they often found themselves helpless when confronted with testing problems. As one informant said, "I know there are problems with translation testing, but there's really not much I can do." The teachers recognized the importance of assessment in their work, but unfortunately often felt inadequately trained in this area (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985).

The respondents believed that the present study was timely and they seemed to value the study a great deal. As one respondent commented, "the project itself has made a difference already because the questionnaires sent out were actually calls to all teachers that translation testing is something that merits our attention." The respondents also made interesting and constructive suggestions, including, making the findings of this study available as soon as possible, organizing at some point a conference on translation testing for exchange of ideas, and setting up a translation testing research centre with the aim to develop a database of test papers and promote translation testing research.

4.2 Goals and Objectives of Translation Testing

Translation tests tend to perform one of the following functions: evaluation of translation proficiency, diagnosis of particular areas of strength and weakness in translation proficiency, and evaluation of achievement relevant to a particular instructional unit or programme. Tests can also serve to motivate students in their translation learning endeavor (or the contrary) and may be used in the evaluation of instructional programmes. Therefore, assessment and testing can be roughly said to have two major purposes: to grant a license and to inform teaching. According to Hart (1994), the best kinds of assessment must support the learning of both students and teachers. As tests have a profound influence on what is taught and how it is taught,

they are closely related to the teaching methodology. Therefore, in translation teaching, assessment must become an integral part, and only for the purpose of teaching and learning (Turnbill, 1989; Townsend *et al.*, 1997).

However, it is found in the present study that for most teachers the predominant purpose of translation testing was to assess students' translational competence. While approximately forty-six percent of the surveyed teachers thought that the purpose was to evaluate students' achievement or diagnose areas of weakness and strength regarding a particular teaching unit or programme, almost twice as many teachers believed that the purpose was to assess students' translation abilities. It seems obvious that the goals and objectives of translation testing need to be adjusted so that it serves both teaching and learning.

4.3 Design of Translation Tests

A variety of tasks are in use in translation test papers today. The task used most often is to have students translate an entire text or several passages of a text. About ninety-four percent of the respondents reported that they used it frequently in translation tests. The respondents cited three reasons for this choice. First, teachers generally believe that context is important in translation and that asking students to translate an entire text or several passages is probably the best way to reflect this philosophy in testing. Secondly, it is also the teachers' belief that having students translate an entire text or several passages can better measure students' mastery of translation skills and methods than, say, translating a number of decontextualized sentences or phrases. Thirdly, since professional translators usually deal with entire texts or passages rather than sentences or individual words, having students translate texts or passages also brings classroom teaching closer to the real world of professional translation.

However, the surveyed teachers seemed to have overlooked the possible disadvantages of using texts or passages as testing tasks. When this kind of task is used, the number of texts that can be included in one single test paper will be highly limited. If students happen to be unfamiliar with the subject matter of the selected texts, their performance might not be a good indicator of their actual translation competence, and this will then totally defeat the purpose of such a test. Besides, when passages are chosen as testing tasks, the kinds of questions that can be included in one test paper will be again limited. Such a test paper may seem dull and uninteresting to students.

The second kind of task that is often used in translation tests, according to the respondents, is to translate sentences. About sixty percent of the respondents reported that they used it frequently. One advantage of this kind of task as test items is that more test items can be included in a test paper and a much broader range of translation techniques and strategies can be assessed in one single test. While translating passages reflects the importance of context in translation, translating sentences "highlights the importance of the accuracy in translation", according to some surveyed teachers.

The third kind of task most frequently used in translation tests can be broadly called translation criticism. Usually, students are required to read two or more translations of the same original, which can be an entire text or several passages, identify the better or the best translation, or identify any errors, and give reasons for their choices. To complete such tasks, students need to have adequate translation competence in order to identify the errors, or to be able to tell the differences between two or more translations and determine which version is better or the best. Students also need to have a good understanding of translation strategies and methods in order to provide the reasons for their choices. The advantage of this kind of task is that, as one respondent commented, "it tests students' translation ability as well as their understanding of translation theory. It's a good way to enable students to link theory with practice."

Another kind of task often used in translation testing is multiple-choice questions. They were used in assessing students' knowledge of translation theory and their abilities in translating sentences. However, many respondents were strongly against using them at all. They argued that students could choose the right answers but might not be able to produce quality translation by themselves. Therefore, multiple-choice questions could not truly test students' translation competence or diagnose their strengths or weaknesses after learning a particular unit. They believed that students themselves should be encouraged to gain hands-on experience with translation.

4.4 Contents of the Test

What is assessed in translation testing, according to the present study, seems to fall roughly into two major categories. The first is what is usually referred to as translation theory, taken broadly to include translation history and other general knowledge about translation. Multiple-choice questions are usually used in testing translation theory. This seems to suggest a separation

between translation theory and practice in testing since it is obvious that such a recall of facts on translation theory and knowledge does little to help students' actual translation performance. The other focus of assessment is students' translation competence. The findings of the present study seem to suggest that all tests are obviously oriented towards measuring what is believed to be translators' competence, i.e., what students can do in translation at the time of the test. While translation competence can be one of the aims of translation testing, it is pedagogically unconducive to have it as the only testing purpose. The best kinds of assessment support the learning of both students and teachers (Hart, 1994). Therefore, we might conclude that the current translation assessment mechanism does suggest separation of testing from teaching.

Translation competence, according to Neubert (1994), consists of three kinds of competence: language competence, subject competence and transfer competence. However, the findings of the present study suggest that learners' language competence and to a lesser extent their mastery of translation methods and strategies have been the main focus of most tests while students' competence in intercultural communication and subject knowledge have been barely assessed at all. Emphasis has been placed on mechanical linguistic transfer instead of students' creativity and problem-solving abilities, which are essential to a successful translator (Li, 2000).

It goes without saying that bilingual competence is essential to translators. Therefore both the foreign language and the mother tongue competence should be assessed in translation testing. However, the findings of the present study show that translation tests tend to assess students' foreign language competence alone. Students' mother tongue competence has seldom been assessed. Furthermore, translation tests have quite often been no more than tests of students' reading comprehension of the original text, especially when students are required to do translation from a foreign language into their mother tongue.

In addition, most of the testing tasks have been literary translations in nature. Students who perform well in such tests may not necessarily be good translators of non-literary texts. However, in sheer volume and financial worth technical and business translation far exceeds the translation of literary texts (Kingscott, 1995; Venuti, 1995). Therefore, as suggested by some respondents, translation teaching and testing should include more non-literary translation tasks in order to bring testing closer to the real world of

professional translation.

4.5 Grading of Translation Papers

Scoring of translation test papers is notoriously subjective and unreliable. It is the most problematic aspect in translation testing. The problem lies in the difficulty in achieving objectivity and consistency in the process of grading students' translations. In discussing the grading of translation test papers, the respondents generally found it difficult and felt frustrated. As one respondent commented, "it is easy to set question papers, but it is very difficult to grade them." Despite different translation quality assessment criteria or models proposed by translation scholars (e.g., House, 1981; Fan, 1990), none has been accepted by all. In other words, there are almost as many translation criteria as translation teachers.

Secondly, the surveyed teachers also felt that it was difficult to achieve consistence in the grading or scoring of translation tests. Over eighty percent of the surveyed teachers considered current testing, particularly the scoring and grading of students' translations, unsatisfactory or extremely unsatisfactory. Since it is impossible to work out a set of criteria that all translation teachers will agree to in the foreseeable future or probably ever, the reliability of translation testing will always remain a problem unless radical changes take place in translation testing philosophy and practice.

5. Implications

5.1 More Study on Translation Testing

More efforts and resources should be devoted to research on translation testing. Testing is an important part of translation teaching and has profound influences on curricular decisions about what to teach and how to teach. However, little study has been done so far although many people have long been aware of the importance. Therefore, one of the most obvious implications of this study is that more efforts must be devoted to translation testing if translation teaching is to move a step further. While more in-depth research is to be done on aspects that have been briefly touched upon in literature on translation testing, efforts should also be made to study the aspects that have so far been largely neglected, e.g., how teachers can make better use of test results, and how testing results can be used to plan for

improved testing in the future (Hamp-Lyons, 1997, p. 298).

5.2 Development of a Theoretical Framework for Translation Testing

A most serious problem in current translation testing practice is its haphazardness. As pointed out earlier, there has been little research on translation testing so far. Teachers might have become aware of the problems in testing but so far there has been little exchange of ideas among them, not to mention any agreement on the objectives, design and grading of translation tests. Translation teachers have each been devising their own tests and using them in their own ways. To remedy such a situation, a theory of translation testing is of paramount importance. Such a theory should provide clear guidance for the designing, administering and grading of translation testing. It should also provide principles regarding post-test application of test results to assist with translation teaching.

5.3 Linking Testing with Teaching

As an integral part of instruction, translation testing has different functions in teaching, i.e., that of providing feedback about the success of the course, reporting individual student achievement, diagnosing student learning, consolidating student knowledge prior to the next instruction unit, directing students over priorities and influencing their approach to learning and so on (Pratt, 1994, pp. 106-107). Thus, assessment may be naturalistic or formal, preordinate or non-ordinate, formative or summative, norm-referenced or criteria-referenced, immediate or continuous, or assessed by the teacher or by the students. In current translation testing, assessment has been primarily used to assess learners' translation competence, whereas other uses of assessment, which are pedagogically more valid, are largely left out. Accordingly, formal, preordinate, summative, norm-referenced, teacher administered assessment has been the predominant and often the only form of assessment, with other forms of assessment hardly used at all.

Curriculum should drive assessment, not vice versa. For this reason, our main interest should be in discovering the progress students are making with respect to the learnings we consider important. This means that we should be interested in assessing not on a calendar basis, e.g., at the end of each year, semester, or month, but on a curricular basis. The appropriate point for summative assessment, for instance, is when the student has had an adequate opportunity to learn something. Therefore, in order to make translation tests

fulfill their teaching role, their diagnostic function must be stressed. Since students are likely to consider tests as reflecting the teacher's view of what is important, the tests should obviously relate closely to the what has been taught (Alderson & Clapman, 1995, p. 185).

It is also worth mentioning that, because of its nature, it is actually very difficult to assess translation competence by using one or several formal examinations. Both teachers and students have come to see this. In a recent survey conducted by the Department of Translation, the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1998 regarding student satisfaction over the BA translation programme, approximately seventy percent of the students reported that they did not like summative assessment and desired more informal and formative examinations, for instance, more home and class assignments.

5.4 Improving the Accountability and Comparability of Translation Tests

Clear objectivity in translation tests cannot be completely achieved due to the complex nature of translation. Nonetheless, some predetermined rating criteria must be used to "channel" the examiner's attention towards the factors considered most important in the communicative act of translation. The criteria chosen for general consideration should include not only the traditional set (grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) but also the so-called criteria of communication: fluency, function and purpose, quality and amount of communication, and communication effectiveness and function. According to my experience, it is best to place emphasis on the latter group and allow the former set to qualify or explain the conclusions reached. Thus I value the extent to which an individual can reproduce the original message clearly more than his excellence in rhetoric. Style of writing, in fact, should only be considered a factor when it affects expressiveness and effectiveness of communication. Likewise, grammar and vocabulary become significant only when the accuracy of the message is affected.

The key to achieve some objectivity in translation tests is the checklist and rating scale. How one uses the chosen (and weighted) criteria in arriving at rating decisions is much in dispute. My experience suggests that it is unnecessary to compute separate scores but that intimate knowledge of the rating levels is necessary so that the rater can transfer his essentially subjective judgements to that scale efficiently. Criteria, written down as reference, are essential to maintaining the examiner's approach to performance rating for all students. Practical knowledge of the rating scale

gives the criteria a functional basis. With the foregoing in mind, a rating scale must be developed that relates directly to students.

The measurement in translation testing might have adequate reliability if we could have each translation graded by several teachers. But in reality, this is extremely difficult to achieve, limited by the time and the resources available. However, whenever possible, more than one assessor should be invited to rate each translation in order to improve the reliability of the test results.

5.5 Bringing Translation Testing Closer to the World of Professional Translation

It was found in this study that there is a considerable discrepancy between translation testing and the real world of professional translation. However, "In any assessment, it is necessary to ask, what real-world capability is being assessed?" (Pratt, 1994, p. 121) Therefore, I believe that testing should also be brought closer to translation reality. For instance, more non-literary texts should be included in translation tests since our graduates will be primarily translating pragmatic texts at work. In translation testing, some questions such as multiple-choice questions which discourage students from gaining hands-on experience in translation practice should be minimized or completely avoided. In designing translation tasks, attention should also be given to the development of students' analytic and problem-solving abilities, which are essential to successful and competent translators.

5.6 Alternatives for Translation Testing

In educational assessment, teachers and students are increasingly less satisfied with traditional standardized tests than ever before in this era of change and innovation. Alternative forms of assessment have been keenly sought. For instance, in writing assessment, many have turned to holistic assessment (Turnbill, 1989) and portfolios have been widely used to document and assess students' progress in writing (Belanoff & Dixon, 1991). Others have turned to computers for assistance in assessment (McCurry & McCurry, 1992). I believe this could also be the future direction for translation assessment. "We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves." (Costa, 1989, p. 2) Therefore, efforts should be made in seeking ways to give students control over translation assessment instead of giving teachers the

sole authority over it (McCurry & McCurry, 1992; Duke & Sanchez, 1994).

6. Conclusion

Translation testing is an important aspect of translation teaching. Teachers have generally felt the need for more research on it. Therefore, we who teach and conduct research on translation need to play a more active role in studying the issue of translation assessment. It is high time to develop and maintain translation assessment theories and practice which are in line with our teaching.

This is a preliminary study. It is mainly a description of current translation testing practice and teachers' perceptions of them. Many issues raised herein deserve much more in-depth research. For instance, further study needs to be carried out regarding designing of testing questions, e.g., how to work out pedagogical criteria for grading students' translations, how to assess students' translation competence, cultural knowledge and encyclopedic knowledge, and how to enhance the validity and reliability of translation testing. All these questions await further exploration.