

Bridging the Gap between Translator Training and Practice: Can Theory Help Translators?

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to explore the relevance of translation theory to practice, especially whether theoretical training can help beginners become proficient translators. Using questionnaires and interviews, it examines the voices of seven translator educators and 53 of their recent graduates from two Master of Translation programs in Melbourne and two in China. Their self-report data was extracted then compared. The results indicate that a) practising translators believe there is some practical value in translation theory; b) the practical value of theory appears to depend on the kind of theory in question; c) educators' perceptions of what theories have been taught are greater than graduates' perceptions of what theories have been learned; d) students desire to learn how to apply theory to their translation practice.

1 Introduction

Practising translators rarely question themselves as to whether translation theory and scholarly work contribute to their practice in the workplace. At the same time, it is reported that students who intend to be practising translators would rather not be bothered with theoretical components (Hanna, 2009).

Meanwhile, academics' defences of theory can be divided into two groups. Some theorists believe in the prescriptive role of theory, seeing it as a set of rules and principles that guide translators in their practice (Kade & Cartellieri, 1971; Vinay, 1983; Komissarov, 1985). Others find this view outdated and non-empirical, claiming that their scholarly work aims to describe translators' performances, not instruct them; they seek to describe, explain and understand what translators actually do (Chesterman & Wagner, 2014).

What is the role of theory exactly? Why the apparent gap between translation theory and practice? And does this mean that theoretical training should be excluded from practice-oriented programs?

This study sets out to explore whether translation theory has a positive impact on translator training. Two Master of translation programs in Australia and two in China were chosen, from which seven translator educators and fifty-three of their recent graduates participated in the research.¹

By comparing the extent to which theory is taught from the educators' and their graduates' perspectives, the study tests the "input" and "output" of theoretical training. It also compares the theories with graduates' feedback on which theory has helped them in real-world translation practice. It thus explores the necessity of including theoretical components in practice-oriented Translation Masters programs, the theory paradigms that need to be emphasised, and the impact of theory on practice. This research is designed to bridge the gap between translation theory and practice and bring translator training closer to the demands of the professional world.

2 Background

Does learning theory help people become competent translators? Some research provides empirical evidence of the place of translation theories in teaching programs.

Ulrych (2005) gives insights into how to integrate theoretical components and what to teach. Taking a further step, Sakamoto (2014) explores translator educators' opinions of the connection between theory and practice. However, it appears that the reasons behind the teachers' answers remain unresearched. Further, students' voices and feedback have rarely been heard or considered.

Yilmaz Gümüş (2013) investigates what recent graduates say about how well various course components prepared them for future practice in the translation market. Based on their professional practice, the graduates generally believe theory is over-presented. Even though they received theoretical training, they admit that they still fail to grasp the essence of translation theory and how to apply theory to practice. So what causes this apparently negative impact of translation theory? Is the problem the theory itself or the inappropriate teaching methods? Further, some pedagogical issues can possibly be identified when graduates' feedback is compared with that of their teachers.

3 Methodology

Between April and August 2018, two Chinese educators, five Australian educators, and 53 of their recent graduates were invited to participate in the online survey. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews had been carried out with seven educators and eleven graduates (see Table 3 and Table 4, for the interviewees' biodata).

The seven educators had a "double identity" in the sense that they teach translation theory in practice-oriented programs at Master level and have experience in translating and interpreting in the professional market. The chosen graduates had had theoretical training to

¹ The ethics clearance was received from the University of Melbourne, Ethics ID number [1851409.1], 11 May 2018.

various degrees. They also had at least one year's experience in the translation industry at the time of the survey.

The four groups are thus as follows:

- Group 1: 32 recent graduates of MTI (Master of Translation and Interpreting) programs in China;
- Group 2: 18 recent graduates of Master of Translation programs in Australia;
- Group 3: 2 translator educators from MTI programs in China;
- Group 4: 5 translator educators from Master of Translation programs in Australia.

First, questionnaires were disseminated to all participants, investigating their background in training and practice, and the connection between theory and practice. Two five-point Likert-scale questions were specifically addressed to both the educators and the graduates: one was “[t]o what extent have the following theoretical components been integrated into your Master translator training curriculum?”, followed by “[b]ased on your practical experience, to what extent do you think the following theoretical components need to be integrated into a Master translator training curriculum?” (see Appendix 1, for sample survey questions). Following Pym’s (2010) categorisation, the six theory paradigms chosen in these two questions are equivalence, *Skopos*, descriptive translation theory, deconstruction, localisation, and cultural translation. An open-choice option was designed as “others, please specify”, which allowed the participants to add other information.

Interview groups were then generated from the survey. Following this, invitations to participate in interviews were sent to all educators and eleven of their graduates, who were extremely positive or negative about translation theory. The interviews enabled us to specify the participants’ attitudes to studying translation theory, and also to gather detailed information, such as their current and past professional experience, and how translation theory was taught in the program (see Appendix 2, for sample interview questions).

The questionnaire data is analysed quantitatively. However, this study does not claim our participants represent a wider range of educators or professionals. Instead, I put myself in their position in order to comprehend the reasons behind their views on studying theory.

The analysis of the interview data is necessarily qualitative. Both quantitative and qualitative data were extracted from the survey and interviews, then were compared in two ways: the graduates’ and their teachers’ feedback of theory classes were compared, as were the Chinese and Australian responses.

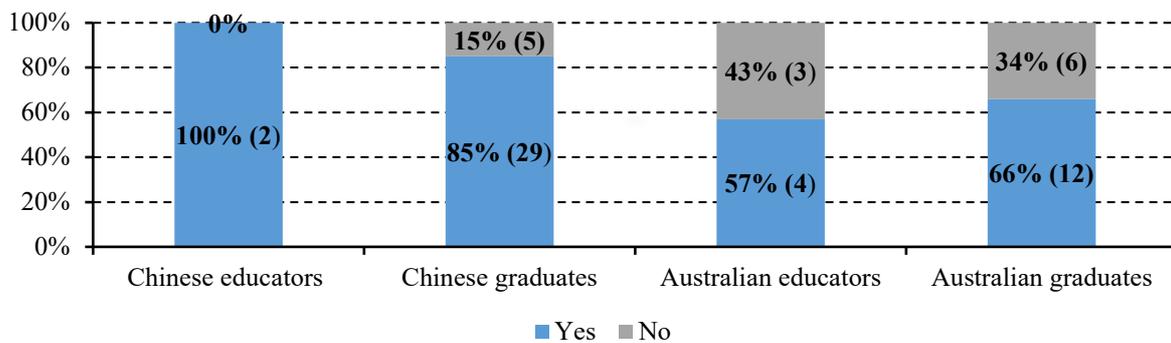
By “Australian responses”, here I mean the responses given by the educators and their recent graduates from two translator-training programs at the Master level in Melbourne. The subjects include both English and Chinese native speakers. Meanwhile, the educators and their graduates from two programs in China are all native Chinese speakers.

4 Survey Results

Here the study looks at participants’ responses to the questions on the relevance of theory to practice, and on which theory paradigms have been included and which need to be included in translation curricula.

Seventy-seven per cent of the translation practitioners in our sample, both educators and graduates, admit there is a necessary connection between theory and their practice. Compared to their Australian counterparts, more Chinese participants admit there is a necessary connection between the two (See Figure 1). However, quantitative data do not indicate why the Chinese are more positive about this issue.

Figure 1. Participants' responses to "Is there any connection between the translation theories that you teach/have learned in your program and your translation practice?" Percentages of Yes and No, with raw numbers of respondents in parentheses



Asked about the degree to which translation theory has been introduced, the educators' and students' responses indicate that the extent of the educators' perception of "what theories have been taught" seems to be greater than that of the graduates' perception of "what theories have been learned" (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). In other words, in terms of theoretical training, the perceived "input" is greater than the perceived "output."

Take "equivalence" as an example. Educators think they *always* introduce this paradigm in most cases (72%). However, students' answers show another side of the story, since their answers are almost equally distributed across "always" (31%), "usually" (24%), "often" (29%) and "sometimes" (16%). It seems that the information "up there" has not been fully passed onto students. Educators probably need to think about more efficient approaches to teaching theory.

Figure 2. Educators' responses to "Which theories have been studied" (0="Never", 5="Always")

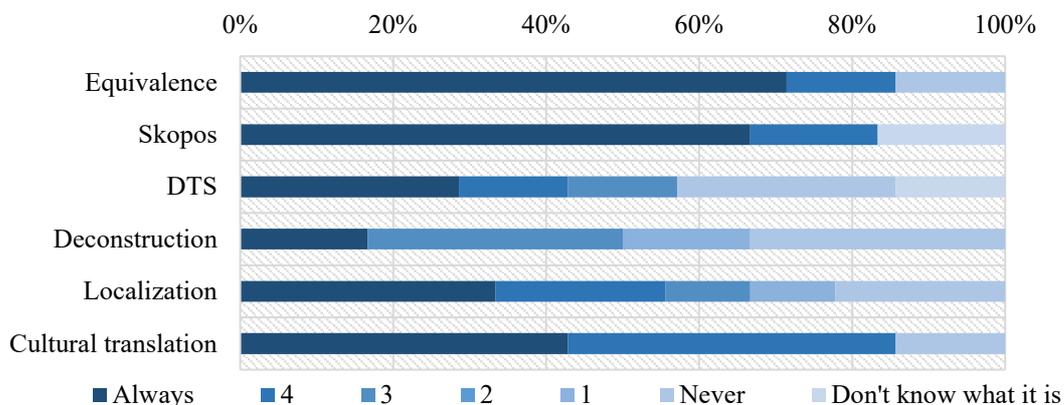
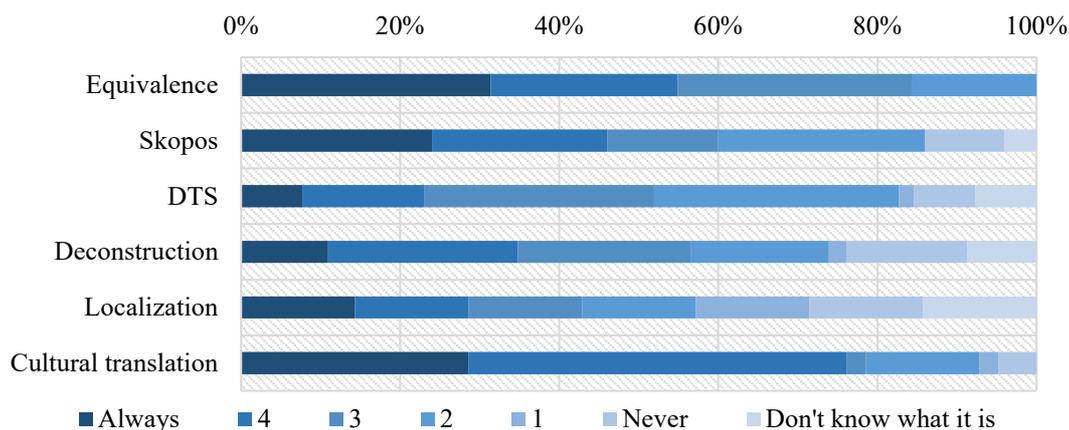


Figure 3. Graduates' responses to "Which theories have been studied" (0="Never", 5="Always")



As to the question about which theory needs to be taught, based on their practical experience, educators and graduates tend to appreciate the target-side paradigms (*Skopos* theory, localisation and cultural translation) more than the start-side orientations of equivalence and deconstruction (see Table 1 and Table 2). The former three paradigms look more closely at the TT (target text) and its functions, while the latter focus on the relevance of both the TT and ST (start text).

Table 1. Chinese and Australian educators' responses to "Which theories have been/need to be studied?" (0="Never", 5="Always")

Order of preference	Available	Desirable
1	Equivalence (4.71)	<i>Skopos</i> (4.83)
2	<i>Skopos</i> (4.5)	Equivalence (4.14)
3	Cultural translation (3.57)	Cultural translation (3.71)
4	Localization (3.42)	Localization (3.71)
5	DTS (2.83)	DTS (2.83)
6	Deconstruction (1.71)	Deconstruction (1.71)

Table 2. Chinese and Australian graduates' responses to "Which theories have been/need to be studied?" (0="Never", 5="Always")

Order of preference	Available	Desirable
1	Equivalence (3.62)	Localization (4.053)
2	Cultural translation (3.55)	Cultural translation (4.051)
3	<i>Skopos</i> (3.15)	Equivalence (4.01)
4	Localization (3.10)	<i>Skopos</i> (3.83)
5	Deconstruction (2.77)	Deconstruction (3.50)
6	DTS (2.68)	DTS (3.27)

When the responses concerning “what theory paradigms have been studied” and “what needs to be studied” are compared, it appears that Chinese educators want a little more of all paradigms, while Australian educators are more sceptical about teaching translation theory (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). This also echoes their attitudes towards the necessary connection between theory and practice (see Figure 1). However, since only two Chinese educators were contacted, the results are not generalisable.

Figure 4. Chinese educators’ responses to “Which theories have been/need to be studied?” (0=“Never”, 5=“Always”)

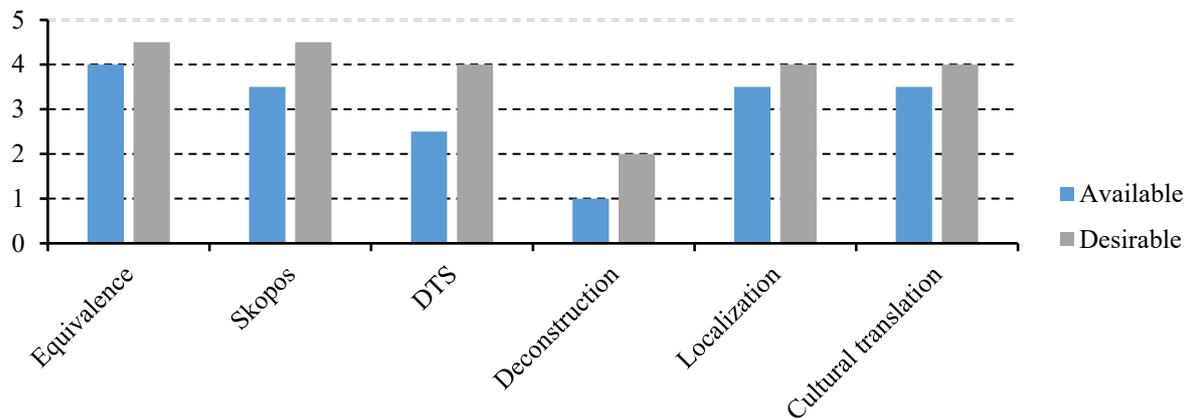
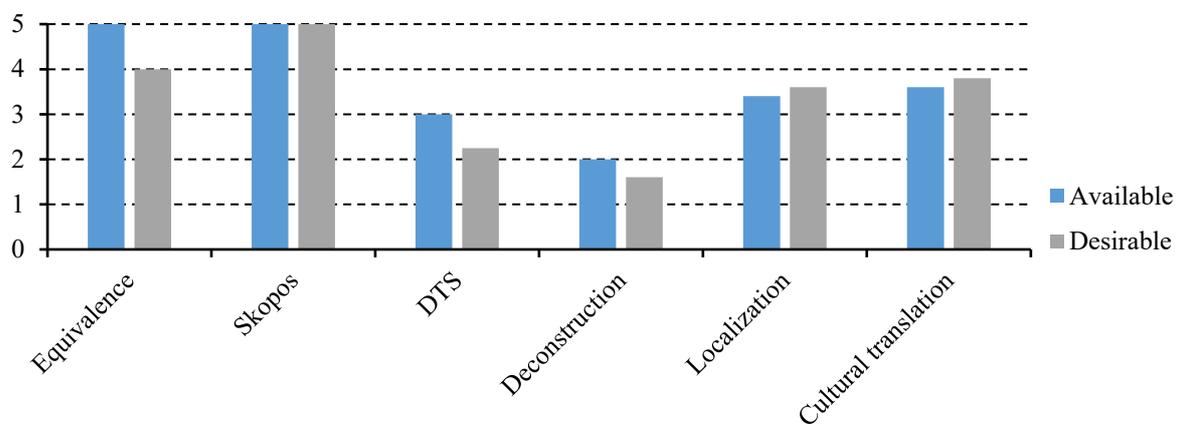


Figure 5. Australian educators’ responses to “Which theories have been/need to be studied?” (0=“Never”, 5=“Always”)



Meanwhile, Chinese and Australian graduates believe all paradigms need to be integrated more than they have been (see Figure 6 and Figure 7).

Figure 6. Chinese graduates' responses to "Which theories have been/need to be studied?" (0="Never", 5="Always")

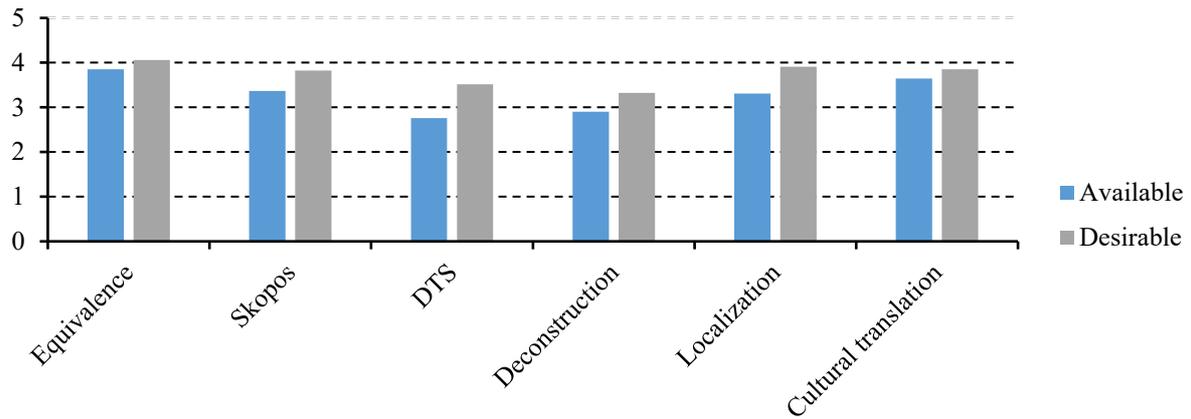
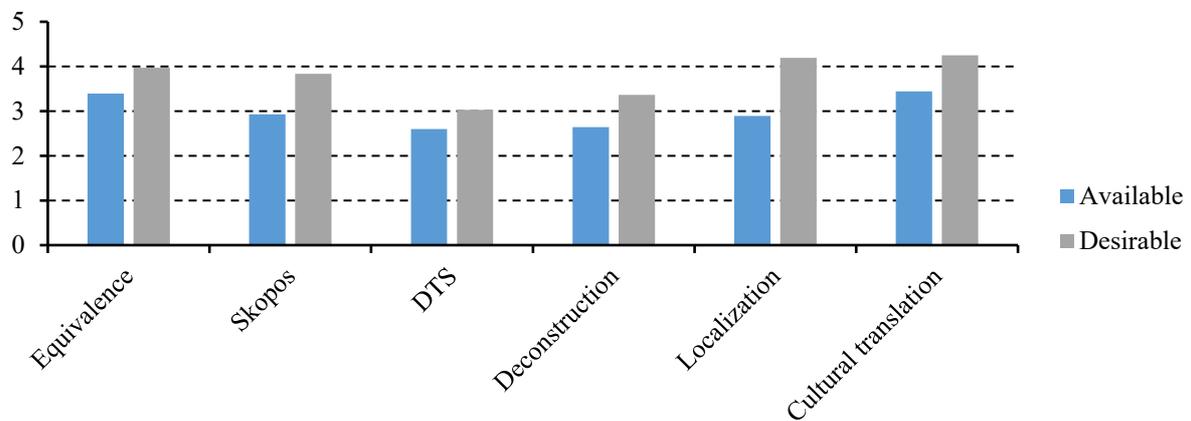


Figure 7. Australian graduates' responses to "Which theories have been/need to be studied?" (0="Never", 5="Always")



5 Qualitative Results

As mentioned, invitations to participate in semi-structured interviews were sent out to seven educators and eleven graduates. Participants are referred to by code with reference to their nationality, gender, and years of practical experience (see Table 3 and Table 4). For example, EAF30 is a female translator educator in Australia with 30 years of experience.

Table 3. Educators' biodata, including nationality, sex, background in translator-training, highest obtained degree, years of practice, teaching content, and teaching philosophy.

Code	Nat.	Sex	Back-ground	Highest Degree	Yrs	Teaching content	Phil.
ECM8	CN	m	Yes	Ph.D. candidate	8	Translation practice	Practice first
ECM5	CN	m	Yes	Ph.D. in Translation Studies	5	Translation practice	Practice first
EAF30	AU	f	Yes	Master of Conference Interpreting	30	Practice and theory	Practice first
EAM5	AU	m	No	Ph.D. in History	5	Translation practice	Practice first
EAF20	AU	f	No	Ph.D. in Political Studies	20	Translation practice	Practice first
EAF5	AU	f	Yes	Ph.D. in Translation Studies	5	Translation and interpreting	Practice/theory
EAM22	AU	m	No	Ph.D. in Sociology	22	Theory/research	Practice first

Table 4. Graduates' biodata, including their profession at the time of data collection, and prior experience.

Code	Then Profession	Prior Experience
GCM10	Translator educator	Conference interpreter; technical translator; audiovisual translator
GCM8	Translator educator (CAT)	Community interpreter; technical translator
GCM2	In-house translator and interpreter at an international school in Guangzhou	Conference interpreter; literary translator; technical translator; legal translator
GCF6	United Nations in-house translator	Conference interpreter; literary translator; technical translator; legal translator
GCF2	Part-time community interpreter	Liaison interpreter; consecutive interpreter
GAM5	Translator educator (translation practice)	Literary translator; technical translator; legal translator
GAM3	Translation student; part-time film translator	In-house interpreter at a film company in New Zealand, business interpreting; technical translator;
GAM1	Part-time translator at a marketing company	Literary translator
GAF3	Part-time literary translator	Translator educator (translation theory and practice)
GAF7	Ph.D. candidate; translator educator (translation theory and practice)	Community interpreter; literary translator; technical translator; legal translator; localization
GAM2	Translation freelancer	Legal translator; technical translator

5.1 Summary of the Interviews

Through their real-life examples, educators explained how they became professionals, whether theory helped, and what pedagogical problems they encountered. Their recent graduates shared their thoughts on the usefulness of theory in view of their past or current translation experience as professionals. Here the eighteen interviews are presented.

ECM8 is a male educator who currently teaches legal translation in a Master of Translation program in Xi'an, China. He is a PhD candidate in Translation Studies and had been translating technical and legal documents for eight years. ECM8 stated that, after having several years of practical experience, he finds translators are unconsciously influenced by theories that they have learned previously. Reflecting his translation decisions, he found that sometimes they can be traced back to certain theoretical references. But pure translation, with no connection to translation practice, is the last thing he wants to see in translation curricula.

His Master students were offered translation practice classes in all genres. The teaching team found that some integration of translation theory has a positive effect, especially on students' ability to solve translation problems. A few guest lecturers were invited to be the co-coordinators of this subject, since the in-house educators are rather practice-oriented.

ECM5 is a translator educator in a Master program in Guangzhou, China. He has 5 years of part-time practical experience. He studied Translation Studies for both his Master and PhD degrees. ECM5 is extremely positive about translation theory, saying that theory, which is derived from translation practice, helps translators comprehensively understand translation and become aware of norms in cross-cultural communication.

EAF30 was the coordinator of a Master of Translation program in Australia at the time of the interview. Before stepping into translator education, she was a senior in-house conference interpreter for the Australian Commonwealth Government. She graduated from the UN Translation and Interpreting Program at Beijing Foreign Studies University in the late 1980s. She states that "It would be meaningless to teach theory for theory's sake" (EAF30, minute 10:23). EAF30 highlights the only way to master translation or interpreting is by doing it, not "with theories in each pocket". The usefulness of theory should be evaluated by whether it can help novice translators solve their problems. However, she admits that knowing different theories shows students a whole picture of what translation is, also gives young translators confidence in their decisions. In theoretical training scenarios, in order to make connections between theory and practice, EAF30 analyses her previous interpreting materials together with her students, then divides students into groups to discuss different translation strategies. She also invited practitioners from translation technology companies to give public seminars in order to keep students abreast of the state-of-the-art.

EAM22 is a male Australian professor who teaches translation theory and research subjects. He has 22 years of experience in technical translation and conference interpreting. EAM22 studied comparative literature, French and German, and received a PhD in Sociology. EAM22 pointed out that there is no necessary connection between theory and his practice. He admits that he includes theoretical paradigms because of institutional expectations. Although EAM22 includes almost all the theory paradigms, he believes that Skopos theory and localisation are the ones that students do not intuitively achieve, thus need to be included. EAM22 prefers the inductive approach to teaching. He lets students discover theories by themselves through activities such as group discussion, in which students come up with different solutions; therefore, they need a metalanguage and theoretical concepts to carry on their arguments. However, he admits the large group size restricts the possibility of inductive learning.

EAF20 is a female Australian translator educator, also a part-time interpreter in Australia for twenty years. She started translating, without learning any theory, out of her personal interests. Without being trained, EAF20 was able to translate well, but was unable either to explain herself or teach people how to translate. For her, theory, as a conceptual tool, makes the translator aware of their translation process, and helps them defend their translation beliefs and explore other possibilities. "Theory is not the golden key." (EAF20, minute 15:08) EAF20 mentioned that student translators should not let theory confine their behaviour. She is sceptical about theory that is generated by people who do not know both languages and actually cannot translate.

EAF5 is the coordinator of a Master of Translation and Interpreting program in Australia.

She has five years of experience in community interpreting and translation. She believes that theory has a positive impact if and when the relevance is overtly shown. EAF5 notices that her students frequently struggle to make connections between theories and their practice. She believes a good lecturer incorporates as many examples as possible and makes connections, otherwise theory becomes dry and students are lost.

EAM5 learned how to translate from a Taiwanese translator in a face-to-face master-apprentice way. Recently he started his career as a translation lecturer for Master students. Although EAM5 always refers to equivalence in teaching, in order to prepare students for the NAATI examination, when he himself translates literature or academic papers he does not think of the concept of “equivalence”, at least not from a literal perspective. In this sense, EAM5 believes that there is very little connection between theory and his practice. He believes the usefulness of translation theory varies, also depending on the genre of translation.

Below, their graduates illustrate what theory means to them and the major obstacles of studying theory. Among the graduates, two Chinese and two Australian graduates are also translator trainers themselves as well as translation practitioners, one Australian graduate has taken up research, and two Australian graduates had working experience prior to their translator training at Master level.

GCF2 is a female graduate of a Master of Translation and Interpreting program in Xi’an. She is a part-time community interpreter and is currently preparing for the Chinese civil servant entrance examination. She admits that theoretical training is completely separate from interpreting practice. They did not have a teacher who especially focused on translation theory, but a few guest lecturers were invited to bring in some theoretical components. She recalled that Huang Zhonglian used his own book 《变译理论》 [Translation variation theory (my translation)] and his subject was translation-based, which is probably not what interpreters need the most. Li Defeng paid much closer attention to research skills than how to apply theory to practice. On the other hand, Liu Heping’s interpreting cases and examples revealed the connections between theory and interpreting practice, although she focused on French-Chinese translation, which was not the language pair GCF2 was working in.

GCF6 is a female Chinese graduate of a Master of Translation program in Guangzhou. She is an in-house translator at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Her main job is to translate draft resolutions, committee documents, and minutes of the UN conferences. GCF6 admits that she never consciously uses theory when she translates. For her, the translation process is intuitive. But when it comes to translation quality assessment, she and her colleagues refer to some theories when they decide the standards. She also believes that it takes translators years of experience and lots of thinking to fully articulate the essence of theory.

GCM2 is a male Chinese graduate, who currently serves as an in-house interpreter at an international high school in Guangzhou. “We want to learn ‘how to fix a car’ rather than know ‘how the engine works’” (GCM2, minute 08:21). Without any intention to choose the research pathway, he came to the program in order to be a professional interpreter. Using Jeremy Munday’s *Introducing Translation Theory*, he and his classmates were given

a theory subject in the two-year study. As he recalled, there was no discussion and barely any examples in class. The theories seemed far away and useless. He added that, even if he had not learned any theory, he would probably be able to theorise by himself one day, based on his experience.

GCM10 is a male graduate from a Master of Translation and Interpreting program in Guangzhou. He has ten years of practical experience. He is also an educator in a translation program in Guangzhou. For him, theory acts as a guideline for translators who have been through a huge amount of practice. But he doubts whether translation theory would help beginners, who may have trouble understanding theories. He states that the theoretical training he had is not enough, especially with respect to how to apply translation theories.

GCM8 is a male graduate of a Master of Translation program in Guangzhou. He is currently teaching computer-assisted translation and has eight years of experience in technical translation. He mentioned that theoretical components were integrated into a practice subject when he was a Master student. In that class, the connection between theory and practice seemed weak, since his teacher rarely mentioned how to apply theory to translation practice.

GAM5 is a male Australian graduate, who has been a translator trainer in Australia for four years. He is also a part-time literary, legal and technical translator. He believes that there is definitely a necessary connection between practice and theory, and theory definitely helps people to be good translators. He mentioned that people who have good understandings of both languages may not be good translators. Beginners need to be guided by theory. He also admits that the theoretical training he had gave him a solid foundation in his career as a translator educator. In his own classes that aim to prepare students for NAATI exams, theories such as equivalence and *Skopos* are frequently touched upon (NAATI provides guidelines on the translation purposes at the very top of the test paper).

GAF3 is a female Australian graduate. She admitted that most of her theoretical knowledge did not come from the subjects she had in the 1.5-year program. She started to know translation theories systematically when she worked as a tutor in the same program for two theory subjects. In a philosophical way, she states that studying translation theory is just like how people get to know this world. “It is just like life. You keep experiencing before you label things.” (GAF3, minute 14:28) In her understanding, translating and interpreting practice helps students understand translation theory.

GAF7 is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Translation Studies, closely following a two-year Master of Translation at a practice-oriented program in Australia. Theory was rarely introduced in the course, but she further self-learned translation theories systematically when she was preparing her Master thesis. GAF7 mentioned that studying theory has some positive impact on her practice. Theories provide translators with more translation solutions and demonstrate different possibilities for their decision-making.

GAM1 is a male Australian graduate, who has been a part-time blog and cyber-words translator for a marketing company in Melbourne for around a year. GAM1 claimed that theory has no use in his practice. However, when it was pointed out that one of his answers in the questionnaire survey “translation should be written with the audience in mind” (GAM1, Online survey question 4) could be considered as *Skopos* theory, which

emphasises the readership and purposes of translation, GAM1 then agreed that *Skopos* theory needs to be included to some extent.

GAM2 is an Australian graduate of a two-year Master of Translation program. Before he enrolled in the translation program, he had been a lawyer for several years. He became a freelancer translating legal documents after he graduated. He noted that exposure to theory made him think about what exactly translation is.

GAM3 is a male British student taking a Master of Translation in Australia. He came to the entire process “back to front”: before he went back to university for professional training, he had been an in-house interpreter for a film company in New Zealand for three years. GAM3 mentioned that real-world examples are crucial for his current theoretical training. He believes theory’s only positive impact is to bring translators into discussions and make them think.

5.2 What Does the Interview Data Tell Us?

Interview data help to make sense of each subject group’s responses in the survey. In response to “[w]hich theories have been/need to be studied?”, as noted, Chinese educators want a little more of all theory paradigms (see Figure 4). When the study analyses the responses of Chinese educator ECM8 and that of GCF2, his recent graduate, it appears that they do not study translation theory systematically in their program. Although they have visiting scholars to give guest lectures with various focuses, students are unable to gain a big picture and the educators are aware of this. In this sense, they probably want more theory not necessarily because they believe theory is useful or highly connected with translation practice. This may not be a solid reason for theoretical training in a practice-oriented program. Besides, both Chinese educators hold PhD degrees in Translation Studies.

Compared to their Chinese counterparts, Australian educators, coming from a wide range of backgrounds (see Table 3), are more sceptical about teaching theory, as they mostly came directly to translation practice without any theory in their pockets. They believe that all theories except *Skopos* are already over-presented.

Graduates generally gave higher mean scores for the “desirable” theory paradigms than the “available” theory in their program (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). The quantitative data thus suggest that they want more theoretical components in the sense that they do not want more theory; they want to master the essence of the theory and how to apply it to their translation practice. The findings echo what graduates say about learning translation in Yilmaz Gümüş’ (2013) study.

5.3 Can Theory Help Translators?

All participants, to different degrees, mention various positive impacts of theory on their practice (see Table 5), such as to foster awareness, stimulate critical reflection, provide more options, and allow translators to have a common metalanguage to discuss what they have done.

Self-awareness and self-assessment are the most frequently mentioned impacts of theory on practice. This appears to coincide with the previous literature (Kade & Cartellieri, 1971; Vinay, 1983; Komissarov, 1985; Chesterman & Wagner, 2014), where theory is seen as both an explanation and the rules of translators' practice. The role of theory as explanation slightly outweighs its role as a guideline, which may further suggest the need for an inductive approach to teaching theory.

Table 5. Participants' responses to the impact of theory on their translation practice, generated from interviews. Percentages of choices, with raw numbers of respondents in parentheses.

Order of preference	Educators	Graduates
1	Self-awareness 100% (7)	Self-awareness 73% (8)
2	Self-assessment 86% (6)	Self-assessment 45% (5)
3	Problem-solving 86% (6)	Decision-making 36% (4)
4	Common language 43% (3)	Problem-solving 27% (3)
5	Decision-making 29% (2)	Common language 18% (2)
6	More alternatives 29% (2)	More alternatives 18% (2)

5.4 Pedagogical Issues and Strategies

The educators' and graduates' responses in the interviews point to some pedagogical issues in the teaching of theory, such as what to teach, how to teach it, and at which stage to do so.

5.4.1 What to Teach

In the interviews, Chinese and Australian graduates all highlight the concepts they want more of, including readership, the purposes of translation, adaptation to the target language, and mediation in cross-cultural communication. For them, *Skopos* is the most useful theory paradigm; translation technologies and some awareness of the start and target cultures need to be further emphasised; but equivalence theory has been over-presented. Meanwhile, the deconstruction paradigm is seen to be rather philosophical and sophisticated. This appears to suggest that, rather than theory being just one thing, its function varies. Some theory paradigms are more practical than others.

5.4.2 How to Teach It

The value of theory to translators largely depends on the approaches that are used to teach it. The graduates point out that they usually learn theory in a deductive way, starting with the "labels", such as names of paradigms and the theorists who make the contribution. Graduates in both China and Australia admit that they do not know how to apply the theory they have learned, even though they have separate theory subjects.

Given that pure theory is rather abstract, some responses suggest that an inductive approach probably works better than a deductive one. If more classroom activities, such as debate, discussion and a problem-solving section, are included, students can be guided to explore theory by themselves. Since in that case theory should be something that makes sense to them and is acquired through translation practice, the dilemma of “how to apply” seems not to apply.

The connection between translation theory and practice has to be made overtly, at least in theory classes. Naturally, students come to a practice-oriented program to learn how to translate. Guidance should be offered to students on how to apply theory in their practice, through their own translation assignments, translation cases and examples. Otherwise, students may lose their motivation and find theory dull and useless (see the above notes on the interviews GCF2, GCM10, and GCM8).

5.4.3 At Which Stage

Almost all the educators and graduates in the current research point out that students need to have some practical experience prior to theoretical training. Others mention that theoretical components could be introduced parallel to practical courses.

6 Conclusion

Can theory help translators? Our principal conclusion is that 77 percent of the translation practitioners in our sample, both educators and graduates, admit there is a necessary connection between theory and their practice. They also recognise some practical purpose in translation theory, such as to foster awareness, stimulate critical reflection, provide more options, and allow translators to have a common metalanguage to discuss what they have done. However, the relevance of theory to practice is rather complicated. Our questions and analyses have led to the following conclusions.

The practical value of theory appears to vary from paradigm to paradigm, rather than theory being just a whole. *Skopos* theory, a practical paradigm, is highlighted as being useful and highly related to practice.

With respect to the extent to which each theory paradigm is introduced, the study finds a huge gap: the educators’ perceived “input” seems to be greater than that of the graduates’ perceived “output”. This suggests that the educators’ information has not been fully and efficiently passed onto students. In their responses to questions about which theory paradigms *need to* be included, graduates generally point out that they do not want *more* theory; they want to go *deeper*. By deeper, they mean finding out about the essence of the theory and how to apply it to their translation practice. Australian educators in our sample, contrary to their Chinese counterparts, are more sceptical about teaching theory, as they mostly came directly to translation practice without any theory in their pockets. They therefore believe that, apart from *Skopos*, theory generally is over-emphasised. I conclude that theoretical training should be included in practice-oriented programs on the condition that its connection with practice is overtly made. The theory paradigms with higher practical value should be emphasised. Also, it would be efficient for students to have some practical experience first to help them understand translation theory.

This study touches upon some pedagogical issues in translator training. Here I would like to share some of my insights. The practical value of theory also depends heavily on the approach through which it is introduced. The inductive approach, including semi-guided problem-solving activities, group discussion, and debate, appears to be efficient in introducing theoretical components. It outweighs deductive approaches such as giving lectures on pure theory.

Practical experience needs to come prior to theoretical training. A translation program at Master level probably needs to consider the candidate students' practical experience when selecting them for the program; practice-based courses should come first. When introducing theory to beginners, educators need to choose basic and practical theories and link theory with the translations that students have done in their practice courses. Educators should be careful not to overwhelm students with names of theorists and a list of theories they cannot apply.

The results of the interviews should be considered more reliable than those of the questionnaire survey. With a larger sample size, it would have been much easier to derive statistically significant findings. The study has also found in the interviews that people have different understandings of the names of six theory paradigms. To explore the relevance of translation theory to practice, further research may possibly seek the opinions of the other two groups. One group is professional translators or interpreters who, for whatever reason, have never been trained in a translation program; another would comprise graduate students from translation programs who have chosen careers other than translation. It would be interesting to test whether people can be proficient translators without learning any theory, or whether translation theory can offer skills that can be applied to other forms of employment as well.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for Translator Educators of Translation Masters Programs

- Personal details
 - Your name
 - The institution where you teach
- Background in translation practice
 - Apart from teaching, have you ever been a full-time or part-time translator/interpreter?
If yes, for how many years?
xx years full-time, xx years part-time
 - What kind of translating have you done? (You can choose more than one.)
 - Conference interpreting
 - Community interpreting
 - Literary translation
 - Technical translation
 - Legal translation
 - Localisation
 - Other (please specify)
- Training
 - To what extent have the following theoretical components been integrated into your Master translator training curriculum?
Don't know what it is Never 2 3 4 Always
 - Equivalence
 - Purpose-based approaches/ *Skopos*
 - Descriptive translation studies approaches
 - Deconstruction or uncertainty-based approaches
 - Localisation
 - Cultural translation
 - Other (please specify)
 - Based on your practical experience, to what extent do you think the following theoretical components need to be integrated into a Master translator training curriculum?
Don't know what it is Never 2 3 4 Always
 - Equivalence
 - Purpose-based approaches/ *Skopos*
 - Descriptive translation studies approaches
 - Deconstruction or uncertainty-based approaches
 - Localisation
 - Cultural translation

- Other (please specify)
- Is there any connection between the translation theories that you teach in your program and your translation practice?

Appendix 2. Key Interview Questions for Translator Educators

- Why do you integrate the chosen theory(ies) into your program?
- Based on your practical translation, does translation theory as a whole or which specific theory(ies) have positive impact on your translation practice?
- If yes, in what way?
- To what extent do you agree that teaching translation theory does not always help people to be good translators?
- Do you think it is necessary to include theory components in translator-training programs? If so, at what stage?
- How do you teach translation theory? Do you use any of the following?:
 - Real-world case studies
 - Simulation exercises
 - Examples from students' prior translations
 - Structured debates (where students have to argue against each other)
 - Comparisons between different professional translations.
 - Comparisons between translations from different historical epochs.
 - Passages from theoretical works on translation.

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