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Reflective Practice in the Design of Training Activities for Language Service Providers

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ABSTRACT

Many educators in higher education have emphasized the important role of translation theory in the undergraduate training of language service providers, principally translators; however, the methods of teaching translation theory to undergraduates who are aiming to become language service providers remain largely unexplored. This article reports on one trainer's use of reflective practice in the design of activities to teach translation theory at undergraduate level at Macao Polytechnic University. Functional theories of translation conceptualize the translation process as a purpose-driven interaction that involves interactions amongst a series of roles and players (e.g., the initiator, the commissioner, the source text (ST) producer, the target text (TT) producer, the TT user and the TT receiver). Accounts of these interactions can seem abstract and dry to undergraduates who lack actual professional experience. Drawing on a self-reflective account of the author's own experiences of translating between Chinese and English, this paper describes ways of teaching the nature of some of the interactions between the language service provider and other players involved in translational activities. Reflective practice prompts instructors to reflect systematically on their own experiences and use that as the basis of materials that illustrate theoretical concepts. The paper illustrates the use of systematic self-reflection in the design of 'real-life' activities that engage undergraduates and so motivate them to address theoretical concepts with renewed enthusiasm.

Keywords: Language Service Provision; Translation Studies; Language Service Provider Training; Teaching Translation Theory; Reflective Practice

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1. Introduction

The teaching of translation theory is a central but contested part of language services training. Over four decades ago, Fawcett listed a number of topics, such as the history of translation and practice, models and translation, and text linguistics, to be included in teaching translation theory at undergraduate level, because he felt that '[i]n spite of the increasing volume of research into translation theory, there still seem to be few attempts to set up separate formal courses in the subject^[1]. Shiyab also affirmed the importance of teaching translation theory, arguing that 'any attempt to teach translation without resorting to translation theory would fail to produce certain elements that are essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of text'^[2]. Although many such researchers have long upheld the importance of the role of translation theory in the training of language service providers, specifically translators^[3–6], translation theory is nevertheless 'often considered difficult to teach and to study'^[7], as well as being 'abstract' and sometimes dull to undergraduate trainees who are more interested in courses with more apparently 'relevant' content^[8]. The teacher of translation theory has to make important curricular and methodological decisions; for example, what should be included in a course of translation theory? How can translation theory be taught in an engaging and accessible manner?

Happily, today, more textbooks on translation theory are available for teachers to use in the training of language service providers, and so trainers have much more guidance than before in the selection of curricular content. Even so, there remains a comparative lack of guidance on methods, and how they can teach translation theory in an effective way that will engage and benefit students. Pérez, for example, concentrated on seven trends or foci in translation theories, such as the languages involved, the communicative nature of texts, and the use of translation corpora, and emphasized 'the inevitability of teaching theory when we teach how to translate according to different theoretical angles'^[9]. In attempting to offer a potential answer to the question put forward by Hatim and Mason: 'on what basis could the selection, grading and presentation of materials for the training of translators be made more effective?'^[10]. Pérez stated that such a basis 'consists in exposing students to as many theories of translation as possible', and thus concluded that:

We, as teachers, should provide them [students] with as many approaches and views as possible to make them flexible in decision-making processes in a real-life professional career. The best way of doing so is to introduce a large number of theories and their preferred views on translation to students by using them and making them visible in the classroom^[9].

Pérez's idea of exposing trainee language service providers to as many theories as possible sounds, in principle, reasonable and insightful; however, it may be difficult to operate in reality, because of some concrete limitations, such as the total teaching hours of a course, the levels of the students involved, and the designs of different core courses for undergraduate programs aimed at future language service providers. Kadiu reported a small-scale experiment of adopting a reflective approach to teach translation theory at Masters level in the UK and discussed its benefits and challenges^[7]. Nevertheless, the methods of teaching translation theory to practice-oriented language service providers still remain a largely unexplored area of inquiry. The present paper offers a potential method for engaging trainee providers in translation theory by drawing on the self-reflections of a professional translator who teaches in an undergraduate program.

2. Reflective Practices and Materials Design

Reflective practices are recognized as a powerful means of developing engaging teaching materials from the raw material of experience. There is a spectrum of types of reflective practice, from systematic and rigorous autoethnography, through narrative inquiry that interrogates personal narratives, to individual self-reflection on one's own experiences, as they are informed by theory^[11]. All of these practices have personal stories at their heart. Tian, Zhang and Xu affirm that 'scholars increasingly regard personal narratives not as merely anecdotal expressions, but as analytically valuable forms of cultural data amenable to systematic examination'^[12]. Many translation theory instructors are also sources of 'cultural data' that, when reflected upon can illuminate theoretical concepts in ways that can be engaging to students.

Experienced instructors can draw upon concrete autobiographical narratives to impart abstract wisdom. As Hughes, Pennington and Makris observe in their review of diverse reflective practices:

Gradually, scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines began to consider what social sciences could become if they proffered stories rather than grand theories, and if they were self-consciously value-centered rather than pretending to be value-free^[13].

Research-based reflective practices may involve numerous instruments. For example, Bowers et al. report that collaborative autoethnography in the service of improving teaching can draw on:

Memories, self-observation, self-analysis, reflection and responses to shared prompts. Teams adopting an analytical approach commonly use emergent codes to identify key themes and consider what data means in context^[14].

This form of rigorous, collaborative self-reflection lies at one end of the research spectrum. At the other, less formal end, the individual instructor can draw upon her own experiences and expertise as a resource. For instructors who do not have the time or the facilities to embark on more ambitious research, there remains value in the pedagogical use of written self-reflection on memories of professional experiences. These reflections can be guided by theoretical concerns; for example, in the present case they are prompted by functional theories of translation (see further below).

The reflective narratives generated by these practices are transformed into classroom activities in accordance with educational task design familiar to many language teachers^[15, 16]. In brief, the classroom tasks were envisaged in terms of *goals* (e.g., to apply one's understanding of the value of the translator to a negotiation with the editor of a publication); *input* (e.g., a narrative of the instructor's experiences in such a negotiation); *activities* (e.g., student comprehension check; discussion; role-play); *instructor roles* (e.g., narrate illustrative stories; check comprehension; facilitate discussion and role-plays; evaluate performance); *student roles* (e.g., listen to narratives; respond to comprehension checks; discuss perspectives; engage in role-plays); and *settings* (whole class;

groupwork; pair work; individual work). The remainder of this paper explains in more detail the theories addressed in the course and demonstrates how my self-reflections, structured by key concepts in functional translation, were transformed into teaching activities that were designed to communicate those concepts to inexperienced language service trainees.

3. Functional Theories of Translation

The goal of the syllabus of my course was to engage students in key concepts of functional translation theory. Nord offers a clear account of the basic elements of this theory^[4, 5]. In brief, the syllabus aims were to ensure that students understood that language services can be conceptualised as a purposeful activity involving multiple agents, e.g., commissioning editors, authors, translators, copy-editors, etc. Translation theorists study the interactions amongst these different agents in order to give a rich account of how the translation brief is made manifest in the target text. Nord observes that:

The role of the translator is crucial in the translation process. The translator is ostensibly the expert in the translational action and should be responsible both for carrying out the commissioned task and for ensuring the result of the translation process. Even when aspects like formatting and layout are assigned to other agents^[17] (p. 174). In the course of the translation process, the translator first acts as the receiver of both the translation brief (the commissioner's instructions) and the source text. After agreeing with the commissioner on the conditions involved, the translator produces a target text that they regard as functional in the sense that it meets the translation brief^[18, 19] (p. 64).

The above quotation affirms the centrality of the translator to the delivery of language services. Such descriptions of the processes involved in meeting a translation brief are, however, for many trainee providers, dry and abstract. It is the responsibility of the instructor to draw systematically on experience to engage the students in such a way to bring the interactions amongst the agents to life. The following sections describe the teaching context of Macao, and the ways

in which the present author transmuted personal reflection into classroom practice.

4. The Teaching Context: Trilingual Macao

Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) is one of a number of publicly-funded or private institutions of higher education in Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR). Macao SAR was formerly a Portuguese colony in Asia; Portuguese is therefore one of its official languages, alongside Chinese, while English functions as an unofficial *lingua franca*^[20]. In MPU's Faculty of Languages and Translation, 'Theory of Translation' is a year-three course offered in the first semester to future language service providers majoring in a four-year undergraduate program of translation and interpreting between Chinese and English at Macao Polytechnic University. Before attending this course, students have already taken three translation related courses, namely, 'Introduction to Translation Studies' in the first year and two translation skills-based courses in the second year, respectively entitled 'General Translation (English to Chinese)' and 'General Translation (Chinese to English)'. Therefore, students are expected to have achieved a general understanding of the basics of Translation Studies and to have grasped some practical translation skills between Chinese and English before they are exposed to the more theoretical domain of translation theory. Considering the students' variable level of proficiency in English, their scant previous knowledge about translation theory and their practical need to adopt one or two translation theories to explain their own translations in the graduation project that starts in the first semester of year four of their undergraduate study, the theory-driven course focuses particularly on linguistic, cultural and functional approaches to Translation Studies. It aims to equip trainee language service providers with some theoretical considerations to help them cope with the practical and delicate issues involved in making appropriate decisions in the process of translation.

As indicated above, self-reflection provided a basis for the design of a course that seeks to introduce undergraduates to abstract theoretical concepts by drawing on the instructor's concrete experience of the professional culture of language service provision. Self-reflection is the basis of more elaborate autoethnographic approaches to professional and other

cultures which seek to provide a 'thick' description of the cultural practices of the group being observed^[21, 22]. While there may be some debate over the precise meaning of 'thick' in this context^[23], we can assume here that such a description of the translation process aims to go beyond a 'thin' description, which focuses narrowly on the linguistic and cognitive processes whereby a translator renders a text from the source language into the target language. A 'thick' description seeks first to contextualize this act, for example by considering the roles, motivations, intentions and behaviours of the actors in the language services process: the initiator, the commissioner, the source text (ST) producer, the target text (TT) producer, the TT receiver and the TT user. The rich context of cases of language services provision has often been discussed in Translation Studies; for example, the 'thick' context of translation is acknowledged by Holz-Mänttari in the 1970s, in his view of language services provision as a process that involves 'purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction and focuses on the process of translation as message-transmitter compounds involving intercultural transfer'^[24]. However, although Holz-Mänttari and those who follow this approach emphasize language services provision as a series of contextualized, purposeful actions, the actual interactions that are involved in translational acts are still relatively neglected. For example, Nord reports Vermeer's inventory of translational acts relevant to language services provision:

- Analyzing the acceptability and viability of the translation brief in legal, economic or ideological terms;
- Checking whether the translation is really needed;
- Specifying the activities required for carrying out the brief;
- Performing a translational action, which may result in a target text, perhaps a short summary of the source text or, in special cases, in advising the client not to have the source text translated because a translation would not serve the intended purpose^[17–20].

While the above is a clear summary of translational acts, it is of limited practical use to trainee language services providers. For example, novice service providers are likely to remain uncertain of the criteria by which a translation brief may be analyzed 'in legal, economic or ideological terms', they may have little idea 'whether a translation is

really needed' or, indeed, how they might initiate a difficult conversation with a client, having decided that a proposed translation 'would not serve the intended purpose.' These issues may only be addressed properly with the expertise that is gained from professional experience of language services provision. The trainer, who is also a professional translator, might therefore draw on self-reflection in order to enable trainees to learn effectively, if vicariously, from his or her experience.

The self-reflection discussed here related to autoethnography and narrative inquiry, but it is less extensive and rigorous than research-based practices. It might be termed 'practical autoethnography' in that it is informed by the principles of its research-focused cousin, but it is constrained by the limitations of time available to the instructors, many of whom have a high teaching load, and limited collegial resources. Its focus is pedagogical in nature and as such its weaknesses can be turned into virtues. While the reflective instructor's biographical narratives are unarguably selective, partial, and open to contesting perspectives, these very contesting perspectives may be elicited and exploited during language services provider training. In short, the experiential stories told by professional language services providers, such as translators, can be harnessed as an engaging and insightful resource by which novices can begin to navigate the theoretical relationships between players in language services provision. The following sections of this paper indicate some of the topics, issues and perspectives that might arise from a systematic approach to making personal experience part of the fabric of language services provider training. The purpose of drawing on personal experience should not simply be to offer arbitrary or amusing anecdotes, but to alert undergraduate trainees to the issues that arise from the broader theoretical and cultural contexts of language services provision, to suggest coping strategies in often delicate situations, and to open for debate possible alternative forms of action when the solution offered from a particular case study is contestable. The selection of 'critical incidents'^[25] drawn from my own personal experience is framed by the wider interactions that the novice provider will have to learn to negotiate. The incidents or stories focus mainly on interactions between the translator and the editor, and between the translator and the ST author, but also touch briefly on the possibility of narrating interactions between the transla-

tor and other language services providers, and between the translator and the readers of the TT. The stories arise from a sustained process of reflection on personal experiences within a theoretical framework that recognizes the agency of different participants in the provision of language services and focalizes the resulting relationship from the perspective of the translator.

5. Interactions between the Translator and Other Actors

In this section, I illustrate how I have adopted my personal narratives, in terms of their relevance to a variety of interactions in language services provision, in order to teach translation theory from the perspective of functional approaches. It happens that my own professional expertise lies in the translating and editing of books and papers. While this area of expertise is relatively narrow, it is, nevertheless, more than sufficient to illustrate the theoretical concepts identified in the syllabus, that is, the nature of interaction between different agents in the purposeful translation process. These are summarized below.

5.1. Interactions between Translator, Editor and Publisher

One of the most sensitive set of interactions that a novice translator will have to cope with is that which pertains between himself/herself and the editor, who usually communicates with the translator on behalf of the publisher or the commissioner of the translation. It is the editor who often plays the key role of initiator in a translational chain, and it is frequently through the editor that many of the details regarding the translation, such as contract, payment and translation style are negotiated. At the initial stage of a translational activity, the interaction between translator and editor is of great significance in terms of visibility of the translator, payment and translation quality. Trainee language service providers may therefore be legitimately interested in how their instructor has dealt, personally, with these kinds of interaction. I have therefore engaged reflexively with my own experiences as translator to construct narratives and displays of 'professional' attitudes and shown my email correspondences with editors to illustrate how I, myself, have coped, more or less successfully, with issues that novices may still consider

largely to be theoretical or abstract.

5.1.1. The Visibility of the Translator

One personal narrative that is particularly relevant to trainee language services providers is that when my role in a project is that of a translator, I have had to expend considerable effort from the outset of a translation project to try to make my identity as a translator visible, for example by negotiating with the editor for my name and institutional affiliation to be printed on the front cover or front matter of the proposed translation. This effort has not always been successful. Although it is that case that in China, where I often work on translation projects, the translator's copyright and her right to be clearly credited in the volume are both enshrined in law, in practice the translator's name is frequently omitted from the cover and title pages of the books she translates. Although in recent years things have been changing for the better, it is still that case that only the translator's name is normally printed, if at all, and it is rare to see a brief biography of the translator, or even one that simply lists an institutional affiliation, anywhere in the translated book. The editor (and indeed some trainees in language services provision) might argue that the relationship between a translator and a publisher is merely that of employee and employer. They might argue that the employee, normally the less powerful actor in the interaction, has a limited say and should accept their relative invisibility.

I would counter that, for me as a translator, the inclusion of my name and brief biographical details is a token of the respect and recognition due to my hard work and creativity. At the same time, increased visibility is also a means of encouraging all participants in language services provision to take the profession of translator more seriously. After being tested in the market, better translations will always stand out and endure in the long run, and translators who are recognized as good will have further opportunities to translate and those who are shown to be poorer may find their commissions dwindling. I also draw on my individual experience to demonstrate why, as well as the translator's name being printed on the front cover together with the name of the original writer, brief biographical details should be given somewhere in the book.

As a translation scholar, I have a tendency, when I pick up a translated book, to look for some information about the translator, but what I find is usually disappointingly sparse.

The worst-case scenario is that no translator's name is printed at all, a state of affairs that encourages plagiarism and the recycling of edited target language versions of the source text. But even when translators' names are shown, they are often printed in very small letters with no supplementary information. Considering the fact that Chinese names are very common, it is actually very difficult to identify who the translator is by referring only to the name. It is, for example, likely that several translators, share my name, Li Li, and so, for Chinese translators in particular, for purposes of disambiguation, it is necessary to include a brief biography of the translator somewhere in the book.

Therefore, I can tell the stories of hard and intermittently successful negotiations with editors in which I have presented my case for the translator's visibility as a win-win situation, as such visibility is beneficial not only for translators, but also for researchers, reputable publishers and readers in the long run. These stories are designed to encourage trainee language service providers to stand up for translators' right to be visible professionals, but they may also serve as cautionary tales of the relative powerlessness of translators. For pedagogical purposes, the issues described here, authenticated by the fact that they are based on my own experience, are rich materials for classroom debates and role-plays in which students can assume the roles of different actors in the process of language services provision, e.g., translator, editor or publisher, and thus reflect on their values and practice their negotiating skills.

5.1.2. The Payment of the Translator

Although I can share the story of at least one successful negotiation with an editor about the importance of printing the translator's name on the cover page of the book together with that of the author of the source text, I cannot relate such a positive narrative about persuading a publisher to concede ground on the matter of fair payment. Some years ago, I was invited by a distinguished Chinese publishing house to translate an English children's novel into Chinese. The rate they offered me, at the time, was RMB 50 per thousand Chinese words. Given my normal average translation speed, I can translate around 800–1,000 Chinese words per hour. After finishing a first draft, I need to proofread a translation at least twice. That is to say, the hourly rate for my professional translation was much less than RMB 50, which then was equivalent to the hourly fee paid to an undergradu-

ate student to tutor a pupil. I showed these calculations to the editor, who said that he quite understood the situation, but it was difficult for him to raise the payment because he had no budget for additional expenditure. So, the moral of this anecdote is that, in China, those translators who abide by the standards of professionalism seek to inculcate and who find sufficient commissions to fill their time, may well find it impossible to make a decent living by means of translating as the nature of the work consumes time and effort, and is poorly recompensed. The real-world dilemma that many trainees will need to face, and that they may be encouraged to debate, is the choice between either accepting inadequate fees for high-quality work because of their love for their profession or lowering their standards and producing mediocre target texts. Again, this dilemma, drawn from actual experience, can be used as the basis of classroom role-plays in which an editor and translator engage in negotiation about the value of the translator's work. The role play can bring in different perspectives, that of the translator's and the commissioning editor's, and can be broadened out to more general discussions of the employment issues facing trainees currently when GenAI threatens to make their employment opportunities less secure and even more poorly remunerated.

5.2. Interaction between the Translator and the ST Author

Generally speaking, notwithstanding postmodern theories of authorial intention^[26], it is still broadly accepted by language services providers that nobody knows better than the writer of the source text about what he or she really wants to express through that text. A translator, acting as a mediator between the writer and the readers, will surely encounter some obstacles and challenges in the translation process because of linguistic, cultural and other factors. Hence interaction between the author of the ST and translator, if it is possible, is very likely to be conducive to a more satisfying end product, and therefore to be rewarding, especially for the translator and sometimes for the ST author as well.

5.2.1. Increasing Accuracy by the Clarification of Doubts

In my experience, some trainee translators, or even experienced translators, are resistant to the idea of communicating with the ST author to seek help in the translation

process. For example, at a conference held at Chang Jung Christian University in June 2015, a member of the audience, who was a local teacher and translator, told me that she had never thought of contacting the ST author when she was entrusted with a translation task and I asked her why not. She responded that since it had been she who had signed the contract with the publisher, she actually felt that it was unethical to ask the ST author to participate in the process. However, if the writer of the book to be translated is still alive, then the translator is advised to try to establish contact with him or her. It is clearly in the interests of both translator and original author, as well as others involved in the provision of language services, to deliver an accurate translation of the ST. Furthermore, the internet and digital communications have made it relatively easy to find a wealth of information related to the author and how to establish contact with him or her. In the unlikely case of communication with the author breaking down, the translator can seek help from the publisher, initiator or the commissioner instead.

To illustrate the possible affordances of such an interaction, I take as an example my own translation into Chinese of a scholarly monograph, *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* by Roberta Seelinger Trites. When I was invited to translate this book from English to Chinese, first of all, I searched the internet, found the writer's email address and then sent her an email, telling her that I was translating her book. She was naturally very happy to know that, via translation, her book would be accessible to the Chinese community and read by a new Chinese audience. During the translation process, I wrote down in a Word file questions and comments about anything I was not sure about. When I had finished the first draft of my translation, I emailed her a message, attaching the Word file that, by then, contained 34 questions, which I classified into family relationships, general understanding, and questions about book titles. Numerous children's novels were mentioned in the book, and, of course it was impossible for me, as the translator, to read all the novels mentioned before translating the critical commentaries on them. In addition, there was quite a number of questions that I was not sure about. For example, the terms indicating family relationships were very challenging for me, since there were altogether 22 such terms in the ST. Was the uncle who is mentioned in the ST an uncle on the mother's side or the father's side? Was the

sister who is mentioned younger or older? Though “uncle” in English can be used to refer to the brother of one’s parents, in Chinese culture there are three possible forms of address: if it is on the father’s side, it is *shushu* (叔叔) when the uncle is younger than one’s father, or *bobo* (伯伯) when the uncle is older than one’s father; if the uncle is on the mother’s side, then he is called *jiujiu* (舅舅). Therefore, the one English word, ‘uncle’, may be translated as one of the above mentioned three possible forms of address, according to a given situation. This is just one illustration of the issues that a translator will encounter, owing to the different linguistic and cultural histories of the source and target languages, and the divergent social and academic contexts of author and translator. The story is designed to show trainees that they need not shoulder the burden of finding a solution to these problems always by themselves, they can also collaborate with the ST author. As well as enhancing the quality of the translation, such an interaction can also speed the process up, no minor consideration, given that translators are often on a tight schedule. Once they are familiar with the story, trainees can practice activities in which they have to find contact details for the author of a ST, devise questions and, finally, they can role-play author-translator email interactions.

Another story illustrates to trainees a ‘fix’ for an issue involving back translation. I was once asked to translate into Chinese a conference paper in English about the legal protection of social rights. The author was in fact a Chinese native from the mainland. In his paper, there were dozens of quotations that he had translated into English from Chinese sources. If I myself had tried to search for the original texts, based on the English versions, even if supported by AI, I would have sacrificed my time and compromised the TT accuracy. And so, I read through the whole paper and highlighted all the relevant parts, and then asked the source text author simply to tell me the corresponding Chinese texts. Of course, he was very cooperative and soon sent me the quotations I needed. Once more, such a story can furnish the ingredients for a ‘critical incident’ that requires trainees to solve a similar problem, before relating how I solved it in actuality.

Actual stories about interactions between ST authors and the translator serve as the basis of classroom activities and role-plays that demystify the process of language services provision, and illustrate that, normally, writers of the

ST are happy to assist translators in their translation process without necessarily being involved in the contractual arrangements or expecting a fee. Their cooperation can increase TT accuracy and save the translator valuable time.

5.2.2. The Quality of the Source Text

Another personal narrative can bring to life the perennial issue in language services provision of the boundaries regulating the role of the translator. The core issue here is whether the translator has the authority to improve upon the source text or is the translator’s function merely to serve the source text? To dramatize this issue, I draw upon my own experience of rendering a series of Chinese short stories for children “大灰狼的热线电话” (*The Hotline of Mr Wolf*) into English^[27]. One of the stories ends like this:

ST: 那棵麵包樹呢? 它又回到了窮苦人那裡。任何富人想佔有它, 都不可能做到, 因為世界上的財富本身就是勞動人民創造的, 它是屬於勞動人民的^[28] (p. 187).

This text is the conclusion of a Chinese fairy tale, *The Bread Tree*, which tells a story of how the son of a poor cobbler finds a seed that grows into a magical tree that, once a spell is chanted, produces bread, rather than fruit. However, at one point in the ST, the landlord takes possession of the tree for himself, only for the tree to bury the landlord with stones, rather than bread. In the conclusion, the ST makes the explicit moral point that rich men such as the landlord should not seize wealth from the workers who have created it – a interpretation of the preceding narrative that can be explained by the context in which it was originally written and published. The ST author, Wang Yizhen, was born in the 1940s and he wrote this tale when it was expected for all literary texts to have an explicit socialist agenda. In the 21st century, the concluding ‘moral’ looks like heavy-handed propaganda in the context of a story written for children. The question is whether the translator has the right to change the conclusion in the TT.

In my course, I demonstrated to trainee language service providers how I dealt with this issue. TT1 is a literal translation of the ST, whereas TT2 is what I wished to present to the editor as the final published version, which deletes the last sentence of the ST. I present the two versions to the trainees and ask them which they prefer, as translators, editors or publishers. I also ask them how they think the author

of the ST would feel about the two versions.

TT1: How about the bread tree? It came back to the poor people. It's impossible for any rich man to have it, because the wealth was created by the working people and hence the wealth only belonged to its creators.

TT2: How about the bread tree? It came back to the poor people (p. 220).

I conclude the activity by relating my own experience of resolving this dilemma. During the translation process, I tried first to contact the author of the ST by sending him a private message on his blog, telling him about my problem and seeking his endorsement of my preferred solution, which was TT2. Unfortunately, I failed to get any reply from him. Then I emailed the editor responsible for this book and, luckily, she finally accepted my preferred version. There are, of course, arguments against such an omission, and these should be elicited in the classroom. English language readers who were interested in the representation of ideological content in Chinese children's literature of the mid-late 20th century would be better served by TT1; however, this was not the primary intended market for the collection. No matter which conclusion the students prefer, the incident provides a concrete basis for illustration and debate of how best the translator can serve the ST—is it within his or her right to change the ST if aspects of it now seem dated?

These kinds of personal narrative offer trainee providers of language services, whether trainee translators, editors, commissioners, or publishers, concrete examples of my various interactions (and occasional failures to interact) with ST authors. I do not necessarily expect the trainees to agree with all my solutions, though I am prepared to stand by them. The first point for discussion focuses on the responsibility for the TT: if the translator signs a contract with the publisher, is it ethical for the translator to seek the ST author's collaboration? If the ST author is open to collaboration, what kinds of question is it legitimate to ask? How might collaboration speed up the translation process and make the end product more accurate? And in those instances where the translator thinks he or she can actually improve on the quality of the ST, how can an outcome be negotiated, between translator, ST author, and editor/publisher? There are no hard and fast guidelines that will inform trainee language services providers how to respond to such issues. However, if the

experienced professional uses his or her personal history as the basis of narratives, activities and role-plays that dramatize the issues, the trainees can also be prompted to reflect upon, debate and learn from the instructor's own wealth of experience.

5.3. Untold Stories: Collaborative Translation Projects and Translation-Reader Interactions

The preceding sections demonstrate how autoethnography, here conceptualized as the systematic exploitation of the professional language services provider's reflections on her biographical experiences as a source of illustrative narratives, offered explicitly as pedagogical guidance and points for debate, can prompt trainees to reflect on the broader context of translational acts, and gain expertise vicariously. They ground theory in experience. The keyword here is 'systematic' since, as noted above, most educators no doubt draw from their personal experience in a more or less arbitrary fashion to illustrate their instruction. The recommendation here is for educators to adopt for pedagogical ends some of the principles of autoethnographic research, that is, to think systematically about the process by which they have accumulated expertise, within the theoretical context of language services provision, and use their accumulated knowledge in a thematically informed fashion.

The main concern of the present paper is to illustrate how language service trainees might be actively engaged in addressing the functional theoretical concepts around purposeful interaction. We have looked at stories of interaction among translators, editors/publishers and ST authors. Other stories of interaction might focus on those between different translators and editors who are working on the same project. Such stories might focus on how consistency of style is (or is not) achieved across individuals, and the role of the editor in determining this. The increasing role of GenAI and more established computer-aided translation software, such as Trados and MemoQ, in guaranteeing consistency of style might also form part of a narrative.

In addition, from the perspective of Reception Theory, readers also play a very significant role in the creation and reception of a book. Reception theory was first proposed in literary studies by German scholar Hans Robert Jauss in the 1960s^[29, 30] and in media studies in 1973 by Stuart Hall

who offered a theoretical model of how media messages are produced, disseminated and interpreted^[31]. Since then, reception theory has attracted steadily increasing attention in literary studies and media studies^[32, 33], and been expanded to various academic fields, such as classical studies^[34], and cultural studies^[35, 36]. However, Gambier laments that ‘[r]eception of translated texts has thus far received relatively scant, uneven attention in Translation Studies (TS), even though reception studies theories have been applied in the last decades’ and continues that ‘[s]ince Nida’s ground-breaking work in signalling the pivotal role of recipients in interlingual communications, reception has become a more relevant dimension in TS, even though such studies are still scarce’^[37]. Only quite recently have Gambier and a few other scholars^[38, 39] adopted the perspective of reception theory to revisit audiovisual translation. Within this limited research, few scholars have investigated the interaction between the translator and the reader.

In spite of this paucity of detailed research, reception theory has provided us with some new thinking about the interaction between the language services providers and the users. The publication of a translated book does not indicate the end of the translational activity, because the interaction between the publisher, editor, translator and the TT users or recipients (i.e., the readers) is also highly significant in the sense that it not only helps the language services providers to achieve a better understanding of translation and the strategies and methods adopted in the translation, but it also determines whether it is a successful and appropriate translation from the perspective of the readers. Generally speaking, the importance of this interaction is relatively neglected in both practice and research, though what readers think about the translation is highly important and influential. How might a language services provider find or construct such stories?

To date, as a professional translator, I admit to finding it very difficult to interact directly with my readers, though I do desire feedback from them. It is clearly impossible to recount to trainees a story that is largely untold. What I can do is to give my translated books to some of my friends and colleagues to read and ask them to give me some feedback. Alternatively, the establishment of reading clubs, a kind of informal ‘focus group’, will give the translator useful feedback that can be turned into pedagogical narratives. Another possible way is to search for some reviews from internet. If the

translated book is sold online via websites then usually there will be some comments from the buyers, so it is possible for the language services providers (translators, editors, publishers, marketing agents, etc.) to get some feedback by reading such comments, although sometimes the comments might seem overly general, or even prejudiced in nature. Even so, this is a potentially valuable channel for the language services provider to learn something about how the readers think about the translation, especially when at present the interaction between the providers and users is not frequently explored in Translation Studies theory.

6. Conclusions

Teaching translation theory is always challenging. The personal experience of the instructor is often a latent source of expertise and a potentially powerful pedagogical resource for translator training. Common sense tells us that good educators make *ad hoc* use stories of their experience to illustrate their classes, and that such stories enable trainees to make sense of more abstract theories that otherwise they might find complex, unengaging or dull. This article has suggested ways in which the professionally experienced instructor can draw upon reflective practices to systematize personal experience, and transmute that experience into classroom activities, in order to bring to life some of the more abstract concepts students encounter in functional translation theory. At a more formal and extensive level, these practices can be developed into research-based autoethnography and narrative inquiry; however, at a less formal level, they nevertheless have a powerful pedagogical value. I have given instances of how stories based on my own history as a professional translator can be used as prompts for activities that engage trainees in considering different types of interaction involved in language services provision in a translation theory class. Sometimes such stories illustrate interactions that the trainees have not realized are possible, for example, a translator daring to ask an editor for the credit due for one’s labour, contacting the ST author to seek collaboration, changing the ending of a ST to fit changed times and circumstances, or actively finding ways to elicit readers’ responses to one’s translation. Sometimes the stories can be used for activities that provoke debate or contention, and the professional educator must expect to have his or her stories challenged and indeed

welcome such challenges. While the present article focuses on individual self-reflection, given adequate resources and willing collaborators, it would be possible to extend this practice by engaging on more time-intensive research practices, possibly reaching out to colleagues in teaching teams, and thus to enrich the sets of experiences that can inform course design^[14]. With richer and more diverse experiences to draw upon, further theoretical issues that impact directly on professional practices (e.g., new types of interaction that derive from changing work practices; the engagement of language service providers with GenAI; etc.) can be addressed in the classroom in a lively manner. Certainly, part of the toolkit of trainers of language services providers should be a basic set of informal reflective techniques that enable us to analyse our rich and diverse experiences, and marshal them into compelling narratives that engage novices in theoretical issues and thus afford deeper insights into how our professional culture actually works.

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