

A scientometric analysis of 792 MTI (English translation) theses (2013-2022): A case study of five universities in Hubei Province of China

Zhao-yi Wang^{1, 2}, Yan Ying²

Wugang No. 3 Junior High School¹

Hubei University²

Abstract: This study conducts a scientometric analysis of the writing types, citation theoretical frameworks, research foci, and weak points of Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) degree theses, taking five universities in Hubei Province of China as an example. The analysis is based on a dataset comprising 792 MTI (English Translation) theses indexed in the CNKI database from 2013 to 2022. Utilizing CiteSpace, the research reveals that: 1) from 2013 to 2022, graduates from the surveyed universities predominantly adopted the translation practice report, accounting for 97%; 2) Students integrate relevant theoretical frameworks to analyze and discuss problems or difficulties encountered in their translation practice, summarizing translation strategies, methods, or techniques; 3) It is observed that current MTI theses exhibit a discrepancy between the five prescribed writing types and real-world writing preferences, confusion between translation theories and translation concepts, and inadequate MT literacy in thesis writing. Following the 2024 edition of the “0551 Requirements for Master of Translation and Interpreting”, this paper provides detailed discussions on problems of surveyed theses, aiming to align with the current situation of MTI education reform and offer practical suggestions for MTI thesis writing.

Keywords: MTI Theses, CiteSpace, Thesis Writing Types, Translator Training, MTI Education

1. Introduction

The Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) program, established as a professional degree by the Office of the State Council Academic Degrees Committee in 2007, has experienced rapid growth, with 319 universities currently offering MTI throughout China. Ministry of Education of the P.R.C (2023) states that “academic degrees are conferred based on primary disciplines, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of knowledge innovation and development. These degrees are intended to cultivate academic and innovative talents with a high level of academic literacy, strong originality, and solid research capabilities. In contrast, professional degrees are conferred according to specific professional categories, with a focus on the needs

of industry and sector development. These degrees aim to cultivate practical and innovative talents with a solid and systematic professional foundation, strong practical abilities, and high professional competence.” As an emerging professional degree, MTI differs significantly from traditional academic degrees such as the Master of Arts (MA) in terms of educational objectives, curriculum design, teaching methods, and thesis requirements (Zhong, 2007, pp, 4-5). Consequently, the teaching and evaluation of MTI programs are still in an exploratory stage, continuously striving to optimize the model for thesis writing.

In previous research on MTI theses, scholars such as Mu and Zou (2011) and Mu and Li (2019) have studied the first batch of MTI pilot universities and foreign studies universities, revealing a shift in thesis writing from academically oriented research papers to more practice-based reports, which accounted for 88% of the total theses surveyed in 2015. Furthermore, Liu and Wen (2016, pp. 110-111) point out that “the improvement in thesis quality has not kept pace with the increasing number of MTI graduates, since there is a tendency for some theses to address similar concerns and propose identical solutions to problems.” The question arises: does this trend persist today? Do the theses from the second and third batches of pilot schools, as well as those from other comprehensive universities, exhibit the same pattern? Therefore, it is crucial at this juncture to retrospectively examine the development of MTI thesis writing while also looking ahead to future graduates, and exploring new avenues for optimizing this field.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to comprehensively and systematically analyze MTI theses by using CiteSpace (6.3.R1 (64-bit) Basic), a literature mapping software, in conjunction with Excel charts. The primary objective of this study is to provide valuable insights and serve as a reference to inform and guide future endeavours in MTI thesis writing.

2. Data source and processing

2.1 Sample selection

Two key factors drive the selection of universities in the Hubei Province of China. First, Hubei has consistently ranked among the top five provinces in terms of higher

education resources since 2002, a position it has held after surpassing Shanghai (Duan & Chi, 2015, p. 40). Furthermore, the gap in educational resources between the top five provinces has been gradually narrowing. Second, Hubei stands out not only for its high concentration of higher education institutions but also for its strong economic performance, with both its educational infrastructure and GDP ranking among the highest in the country (Zhao & Jia, 2019, p. 68). For instance, in 2019, Hubei, alongside Shanxi, achieved a higher educational modernization index than some regions in Eastern China (Dai & Wang, 2022, p. 50).

According to reports from the China National Committee for Graduate Education of Translation and Interpreting (CNCGETI)¹(2009; 2010), by 2010, nine universities in Hubei had been authorized to admit students to the MTI program, positioning them as leaders in both the history and experience of training translation and interpreting professionals. While previous research on the first batch of MTI universities, as well as studies on select foreign counterparts, offers valuable insights, this study specifically examines the second and third batches of MTI program universities in Hubei. This approach aims to provide a more contemporary perspective on the state of MTI education and offer actionable recommendations for enhancing its pedagogical practices.

In terms of duration, the second batch and third batch of MTI students were enrolled in 2010 and took a two-year program, meaning that the early MTI theses can be found in the year 2012, which is confirmed by “*The Cultivation Guideline for Master of Translation and Interpreting*”² (*The Guideline 2007*)” and “*The Guideline 2010*”. However, it is noteworthy that the earliest universities to obtain the MTI enrollment qualification were Wuhan University (WHU) and Central-China Normal University (CCNU), both of which are the second batch of MTI training units. The third batch of MTI training units in Hubei Province includes Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), China University of Geosciences, (CUG, Wuhan), Wuhan University of Technology (WUT), Hubei University (HUBU), Zhongnan University of Economics and Law (ZUEL), South-Central

¹ An official organization for guiding the training and education of the MTI program.

² Official documents used to guide the educational and training programs for MTI.

Minzu University (SCMU), and China Three Gorges University (CTGU). These nine universities boast a relatively long MTI training history and rich educational experience within the province and can reflect the current situation of MTI education and training in Hubei Province, China. Therefore, this paper selects English translation master's theses from the second and third batches of MTI education units in China as research data, which possesses scientific and representative characteristics.

It is worth noting that due to force majeure, however, the MTI theses from WHU, CUG, WUT, and HUBU are not accessible, and cannot be searched and downloaded through CNKI. Therefore, the survey report includes the following five universities offering MTI programs: HUST, CCNU, ZUEL, SCMU, and CTGU³. The theses of the aforementioned five universities, namely HUST, CCNU, ZUEL, SCMU, and CTGU, were all uploaded to the CNKI Theses and Dissertations Database. Therefore, all the data used in this survey report were obtained from the CNKI platform, including data retrieval and acquisition.

2.2 Data processing

The data processing involves utilizing the built-in conversion function of CiteSpace to transform the raw data. Before the conversion, two files need to be created: an "input" file and an "output" file. The initial data will serve as the "input" data, while the converted files generated by CiteSpace will be automatically stored in the "output" file. It is crucial that the input and output files correspond one-to-one during the data conversion process, as illustrated in Figure 2.2-1.

³ All five universities are among the second and third batches of MTI universities in China. The Master's theses from these five universities are accessible and retrievable through the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), making the data publicly available.

Wang, Z-y, & Ying, Y. (2025). A scientometric analysis of 792 MTI (English Translation) theses (2013-2022): A case study of five universities in Hubei Province of China. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.51287/cttle20251>



Figure 2.2-1 Conversion process

Ultimately, the final data is obtained after undergoing the conversion in CiteSpace, as depicted in Figure 2.2-2.



Figure 2.2-2 Converted data

At this stage, the process of data processing has been successfully concluded. The readable data can now be utilized in CiteSpace to generate knowledge maps and facilitate further analysis.

3. Data analysis

3.1 Features of thesis types of surveyed theses

Following “*The Guideline 2010*” and “*0551 Requirements for Master of Translation and Interpreting 2015 (The Requirements 2015)*”, the writing of an MTI thesis can adopt any of the five different types, depending on the specific training objectives and the interests and strengths of the thesis writers, defining as follows: internship report on important positions, translation practice report, translation experiment report, translation survey report, and translation research paper.

According to the statements provided in the official documents mentioned above, this paper categorizes the 792 theses of this survey. By exporting sample data from CNKI and importing it into an Excel spreadsheet, the theses are classified according to the five MTI thesis types outlined in the official guidelines. A bar chart analysis is then generated (see Figure 3.1-1). It can be observed that the theses from the five universities surveyed in the field of MTI (English Translation) are primarily composed of practice reports, followed by research papers. Internship reports, experiment reports, and survey reports have relatively fewer numbers, with a total of three papers only.

Based on the existing bar chart (Figure 3.1-1), a pie chart (Figure 3.1-2) can be generated by selecting the Excel chart tool, replacing the bar chart with a pie chart, and changing the analysis from quantity to proportion to clearly illustrate the distribution of the five types of thesis writing. In terms of distribution features, translation practice reports are the most commonly adopted writing type, accounting for 97% of the total, followed by translation research papers at 2.7%. Internship reports, experiment reports, and survey reports constitute less than 1% of the total. Currently, translation practice reports remain the predominant mainstream writing type utilized in MTI (English Translation) degree theses.

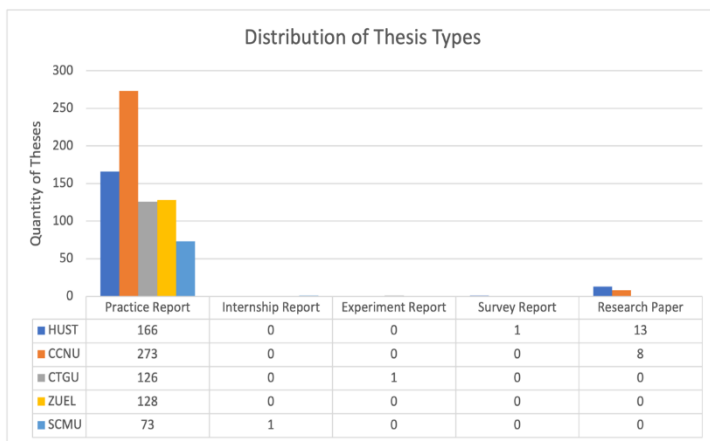


Figure 3.1-1 Distribution of Thesis Types

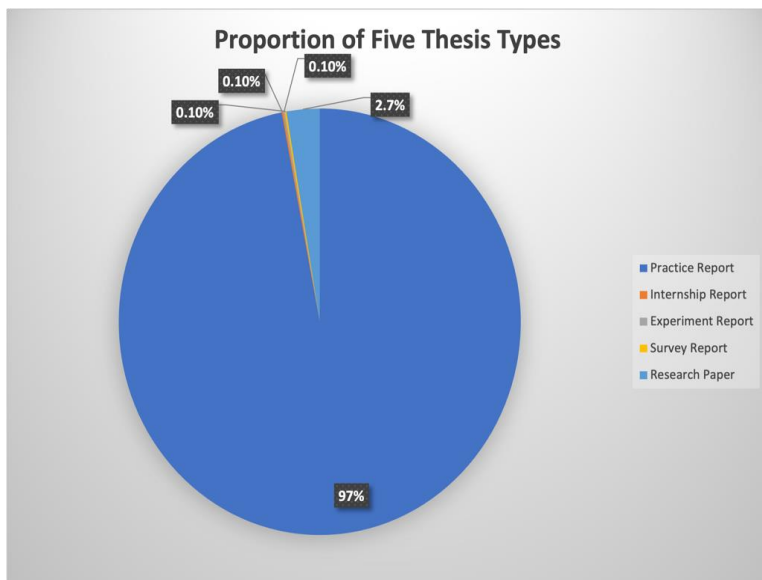


Figure 3.1-2 Proportion of five thesis type

3.2 Features of research hotspots of the theses

3.2.1 Thesis foci

The keywords extracted from the titles or abstracts of academic papers can accurately convey the core content and essence of scholarly works. Utilizing big data quantitative tools to extract literature keywords and plot their frequency distributions enables the study of development trends and research hotspots within a particular field (Li & Chen, 2016, p. 194). For this study, the converted data was imported into CiteSpace, with the analysis period set as 2013-2022 and a time slice of 1 year. The Node Type was selected as “keyword,” and the Top 50 keywords were chosen for each time slice. The linear strength was set to “Cosine.” Considering that the MTI theses will inevitably address topics such as translation strategies, translation methods, and translation techniques in the Case Analysis section, to avoid the generation of overly broad keywords that may affect the judgment of the thesis foci, the aforementioned co-occurrence words will be concealed. The resulting research hotspots map (Figure 3.2-1) is as follows.



Figure 3.2-1 Research hotspots of 792 theses

The nodes in the graph represent keywords extracted from the titles and abstracts, with the size of each node proportional to its frequency of occurrence (Li & Chen, 2016, p. 194). As stated by Chen (2016, p. 47), in this case, “nodes refer to keywords. However, nodes can also represent other models of entities. The size of a node indicates the historical significance of that node.” The lines connecting the nodes are co-occurrence links in this context. These links, designated by different colours, indicate when the connection between two keywords is established for the first time (Chen, 2016, p. 42).

According to Chen et al. (2015), “the effectiveness of the knowledge map visualization primarily relies on two modularity metrics: the Modularity Q value and the Weighted Mean Silhouette S value. The Q value typically falls within the range of [0,1], and a Q value greater than 0.3 indicates significant community structure. When the S value reaches 0.7, the cluster is considered highly efficient and convincing. If the S value is above 0.5, the cluster is generally regarded as reasonable”. In this report, the Q value of the generated knowledge map for this report is 0.5056, while the S value is 0.8095, indicating a reasonable and convincing cluster structure. The nodes in the graph represent keywords extracted from the literature, with the size of each node proportional to its frequency of occurrence (Li & Chen, 2016, p. 194).

The foci of a paper include its research focus and approach, not limited to the content it explores, such as translation strategies, methods, or skills. It also relates to the type of translated text. Based on knowledge maps (Figure 3.2-1), this section summarizes the foci of the 792 surveyed papers in the following Table 3.2-1.

Table 3.2-1 Top 20 keywords of thesis foci

Count	Keywords	Fields
31	Informative Text	Text Type
14	Children’s Literature	Literary Studies
13	Academic Translation	Translation Studies
13	Ethnic Text	Text Type
11	Legal Translation	Translation Studies

Count	Keywords	Fields
9	Optimal Relevance	Literary Studies
8	Subtitle Translation	Translation Studies
7	Cultural-loaded Words	Translation Studies
6	Economic Text	Text Type
5	Informative Function	Linguistics
5	Translation Principles	Translation Studies
4	Artificial Intelligence	Computer Science
4	News Translation	Translation Studies
4	Literary Translation	Translation Studies
4	Tourism Translation	Translation Studies
4	Popular Science Translation	Translation Studies
4	Horizon of Expectations	Literary Studies
3	Chinese Culture	Cultural Studies
3	Back Translation	Translation Studies
3	Cultural-specific Items	Translation Studies

Further classification and analysis of the nodes in the graph reveal that high-frequency research hotspots in MTI primarily focus on academic translation, legal translation, subtitle translation, cultural-loaded words, translation principles, news translation, literary translation, tourism translation, popular science translation, back translation and cultural-specific items. These topics are encompassed within the domain of translation studies.

Informative text, ethnic text and economic text belong to the category of text types, emphasizing the differences in translated text types. The research foci of the theses surveyed centre around exploring and analyzing the thesis through the lens of translated text typologies. In literary studies, children's literature, optimal relevance, and horizon of expectations are pertinent categories. The domain of linguistics primarily concerns itself with the informative function.

Additionally, the topic of "artificial intelligence" is situated within the discipline of computer science. The current research foci of MTI theses are gradually shifting

towards interdisciplinary studies, transitioning from literary research to a combined development of translation studies, textual analysis, and research on tools related to machine translation. However, the node is relatively small, with fewer citations as shown in the Table above. It can be inferred that the current use of machine translation in MTI thesis writing, particularly in analyzing and comparing translated texts generated by tools, is relatively underdeveloped (Count 4). This gap is significant, especially given the rapid advancement of AI technologies and their profound impact on the translation industry and market.

In conclusion, current research for MTI degree theses continues to prioritize topics in translation studies, complemented by discussions on text type and literary themes. Emerging trends in translation technology are gradually attracting attention, indicating significant potential for further research.

3.2.2 Commonly used theories

According to “*The Guideline 2011 (n.d.)*”, “regardless of any type adopted, theses must be written in a foreign language, integrating theory and practice, and conforming to academic standards in thesis writing.” Furthermore, numerous scholars have emphasized the significance of applying theories in MTI theses, as this approach can guide students in reflection and enhance their competence. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the commonly used theoretical frameworks to uncover students’ preferences and challenges encountered when employing theories. By adjusting the nodes in the knowledge mapping, hiding the nodes related to the research foci, and selecting those associated with the theoretical frameworks, Figure 3.2-2 is generated, as shown below.

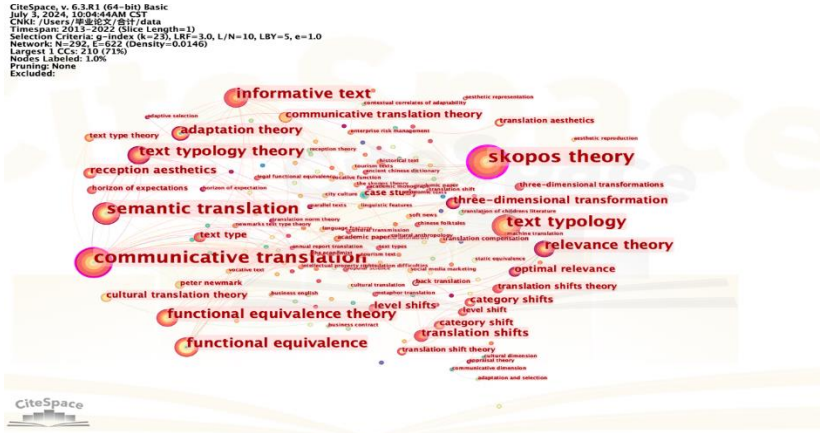


Figure 3.2-2 Commonly used theoretical frameworks of 792 theses

The above figure shows that nodes related to theoretical frameworks are significantly more prominent than those focused on the research hotspots of MTI theses. This is primarily due to the characteristic of past MTI theses being “Theoretical Framework-Based”. Further analysis and classification of Figure 3.2-2 lead to the derivation of Table 3.2-2.

Table 3.2-2 Commonly used theoretical frameworks of 792 theses

Count	Frameworks	Fields	Origin
77	Communicative Translation	Translation Studies	Western
75	Skopos Theory	Translation Studies	Western
47	Semantic Translation	Translation Studies	Western
43	Text Typology	Translation Studies	Western
28	Functional Equivalence	Translation Studies	Western
23	Relevance Theory	Linguistics	Western
15	Adaptation Theory	Linguistics	Western

Count	Frameworks	Fields	Origin
12	Catford's Translation Shifts	Translation Studies	Western
12	Eco-translatology	Translation Studies	Chinese
11	Reception Aesthetics	Literary Studies	Western
7	Cultural Translation Theory	Translation Studies	Western
5	TranslationVariation Theory	Translation Studies	Chinese
5	Translation Aesthetics	Translation Studies	Chinese
1	Cohesion Theory	Linguistics	Western

The extraction of keywords for the theoretical framework is also based on the keywords and abstracts of the surveyed theses. The data presented in the table clearly shows that theoretical frameworks related to translation studies dominate the surveyed papers, followed by linguistic theories, with literary theories appearing the least. The translation-related frameworks include Communicative Translation, Skopos Theory, Semantic Translation, Text Typology, Functional Equivalence, Catford's Translation Shifts, Eco-translatology, Cultural Translation Theory, Translation Variation Theory, and Translation Aesthetics. Linguistic theories featured in the papers include Relevance Theory, Adaptation Theory, and Cohesion Theory, while literary theories primarily focus on Reception Aesthetics. This suggests that, while traditional translation theories remain the predominant reference in current MTI theses, some students also draw on linguistic and literary theories in their thesis writing and case analyses. This trend can be attributed to the fact that translation studies have evolved into a first-level discipline, currently experiencing a period of rapid development.

As indicated by the Table above, it is apparent that certain translation concepts proposed by scholars, such as Communicative Translation, Semantic Translation, Text Types, and Functional Equivalence, are frequently cited by MTI students as translation theories. However, Dictionary of Translation Studies (Shuttleworth & Moira, 2014, p. 184) offers two definitions of translation theory: one refers to the term used to denote the entire discipline of translation studies, while the other refers to specific attempts to explain some or all phenomena systematically related to

translation. From this perspective, it is clear that the terms extracted from MTI theses above the Table 3.2-2 cannot be classified into theoretical frameworks. In terms of the essence of the discipline, the framework theory of the discipline cannot be regarded as a pure translation theory, nor can translation studies methodology be classified as part of translation theory (Fan & Yang, 2024, p. 100). Therefore, current MTI theses have exhibited a confusion between translation theories with translation concepts. This issue will be further discussed in Section 4.1.3.

In summary, the 792 surveyed theses primarily cite theoretical frameworks characterized by two main features: 1) the predominance of translation studies frameworks, with linguistic theories serving a secondary role and 2) confusion between the translation concepts and translation theories in the interpretation and application of these theoretical frameworks.

3.2.3 Transitional Research Trends of Hotspots

To facilitate the tracking and analysis of transitional research trends within hotspots, CiteSpace was utilized to generate a Timeline View 3.2-3 of MTI (English Translation) theses from the universities surveyed.

According to the researchers Yue Chen and Chao-mei Chen, CiteSpace's Timeline View provides a clear visualization of the updating and mutual influence of literature. The quantity of literature within a certain period indicates the level of research output during that period, with a higher quantity suggesting a prosperous period and a lower quantity indicating a period of decline. The interconnection between nodes in the map reveals the inheritance relationships between different periods, with a greater number of connections indicating stronger inheritance and vice versa (Chen, Chen & Hu, 2016, pp. 76-77).

Based on the analysis of Figure 3.2-3, it can be inferred that the research focus and trends of the 792 MTI (English Translation) theses from surveyed universities can be divided into three main periods:

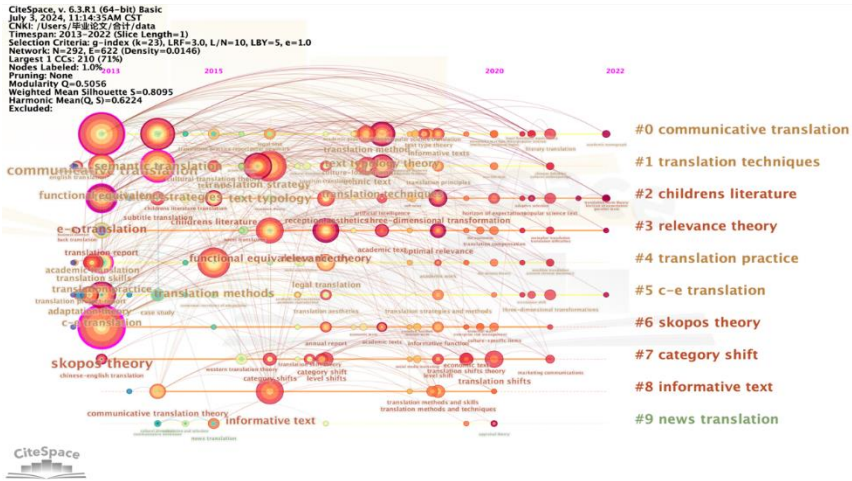


Figure 3.2-3 Timeline view of 792 theses

The period of 2013-2015 experienced a rapid growth phase, characterized by a flourishing research landscape in both translation theory and focal points (with a focus on theoretical aspects). The generated clusters and nodes during this period had a profound impact on subsequent research developments.

The period of 2016-2019 witnessed a steady growth phase, with a relative decrease in theoretical breakthroughs. The research focus of the theses shifted towards hotspots and focal point studies, such as text types and language characteristics.

The period of 2020-2022 can be described as a relatively low phase. The map indicates that some cluster timelines experienced interruptions, resulting in a decrease in the number of nodes. However, it is important to note that there may be a lag in the inclusion of literature in the CNKI database (Yin & Liu, 2017, p. 23). Therefore, the interruption in development could be due to some papers not being included in the database yet.

Further analysis of each stage reveals that the nodes during the period of 2013-2015 are generally larger, with a primary focus on MTI theses citing theories. Nodes from this period significantly influence subsequent research foci and keywords. Through timeline representation, it is evident that the interconnections of nodes during this period intersect in a disorderly manner with emerging research hotspots, indicating a profound and long-lasting impact. From 2016 to 2019, the number of nodes began to increase, indicating a further expansion of the MTI research focus. Notably, the number of nodes citing theories noticeably decreased, and research topics and keywords began to shift towards studies of text types, translation themes, and translation phenomena. From 2020-2022, it is evident from the timeline map that the number of nodes in the graph decreased. This is partly because most of the theses included in this report were collected before 2022.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Current Weak Points in MTI Thesis Writing

4.1.1 Discrepancy between Five Writing Types and Real-World Writing Preferences

“*The Requirements 2015*” and previous scholars have made various attempts regarding the format of MTI theses. However, subsequent official guidelines have established five specific thesis formats, as outlined in Section 3.1. A study on MTI theses finds that “with the exception of one institution that emphasizes research papers, the majority of other institutions focus primarily on translation practice reports, while the number of theses in other formats is negligible” (Liu & Wen, 2016). Another study on MTI theses at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies finds that the proportion of translation practice reports surged from 3% in 2008 to 88% in 2015, while internship reports accounted for 6%, experimental reports 0%, survey reports 1%, and translation research papers 5% (Mu & Li, 2019). By 2018, translation practice reports have become a common type of MTI thesis.

According to our findings, translation practice reports constituted 97% of the total, whereas experiment reports, internship reports, and survey reports together accounted for less than 1%. The occurrence of this phenomenon is absolutely

interesting and calls for the potential need for further adjustments and optimizations to the proposed five thesis types.

The translation practice report is widely favoured by most students and, to some extent, aligns with the current educational objectives of MTI programs because the practice-oriented nature of the program is designed to cultivate applied professionals for the translation industry rather than researchers. Given the practice-oriented nature of MTI education, the continued inclusion of research papers and experiment reports warrants further consideration. The discrepancy between past guidelines and the findings of recent surveys on MTI thesis types suggests that a re-evaluation is needed to determine whether formats such as translation experiment reports and translation research papers should be retained.

4.1.2 Confusion Between Translation Theories and Translation Concepts

In Holmes's explanations of his 'map' of translation studies, he defines the descriptive translation theory as 'the description of the phenomena of translation' while translation theory as 'the establishment of general principles to explain and predict such phenomena' (Munday, Pinto & Blakesley, 2022, p. 15). In a broad sense, translation theory refers to various kinds of knowledge about translation, including its origins, definitions, strategies, principles, and methods. In a narrower sense, translation theory emphasizes the role of theory in guiding practice (Fan & Yang, 2024, p. 94). However, according to the survey data, many MTI theses exhibit a certain misunderstanding of the use of theoretical frameworks. For instance, in this survey, the five most frequently cited translation theories or concepts include Communicative Translation, Skopos Theory, Semantic Translation, Functional Equivalence, and Text Typology. A closer analysis of these theoretical frameworks or approaches reveals that students have misunderstood certain concepts proposed within a translation theory as representing the entire theoretical framework, thereby making a hasty generalization. In the following paragraphs, the five concepts most frequently cited by MTI students—Communicative Translation, Skopos Theory, Semantic Translation, Functional Equivalence, and Text Typology—will be defined

and analyzed in detail. The Section aims to examine whether these five concepts should all be classified as translation theories.

Formal and Dynamic Equivalence and the principle of equivalent effect are terms put forward by Nida. He defines Formal Equivalence as “a principle focusing on the message itself in both form and content” (Nida, 1964, p. 159). Dynamic Equivalence is based on what Nida calls ‘the principle of equivalent effect’, where ‘the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message (Nida, 1964, p. 159). Functional Equivalence and the principle of equivalent effect are more aligned with providing translation strategies for translators during the translation process. They are key concepts within Nida’s science of translating but do not constitute an independent theory.

The description of Communicative Translation resembles Nida’s dynamic equivalence in the effect it is trying to create on the target text reader, while Semantic Translation has similarities to Nida’s Formal Equivalence (Munday, Pinto & Blakesley, 2022, p. 59). However, these two terms proposed by Newmark represent two translation methods that focus on more specific aspects of the translation process rather than the construction of overarching theories. As Newmark (1981, p. 63) argues that “semantic translation differs from literal translation in that it ‘respects context’, interprets and even explains”. Clearly, Newmark’s definition of this translation concept leans more towards a translation method rather than a systematic translation theory.

As for Reiss’s functional approach, Text Typology aims initially at systematizing the assessment of translations. She suggests ‘specific translation methods according to Text Typology’ (Reiss, 1976, p. 20). Text typology categorizes three different texts in order to facilitate the adoption of specific translation methods tailored to the translation of different types of texts. But Munday (2022, p. 104) points out that “there are also question marks as to how Reiss’s proposed translation methods are to be applied in the case of a specific text.” Among the frequently cited frameworks, only Skopos Theory can be considered a systematic translation theory, since Skopos Theory focuses above all on the purposes of the translation, which determines the

translation methods and strategies that are employed to produce a functionally adequate result. Therefore, knowing why a source text is to be translated and what the function of the target text will be is crucial for the translator (Munday, Pinto & Blakesley, 2022, p. 110).

It is evident that the frequently cited so-called “translation theoretical frameworks” are more accurately specific translation thoughts, concepts, or principles proposed by scholars. Translation thought differs from translation theory. While translation theory is a systematic summary and refinement of rules, principles, and methods, translation thought encompasses deeper concepts, collective spirit, values, and ways of thinking. Translation theory is typically proposed by individuals or forms schools of thought, whereas translation thought transcends to the level of the era and society (Shao, 2018, p. 103). This highlights the ongoing issue in MTI thesis writing, where there is often confusion between translation theories and translation concepts.

4.1.3 Inadequate MT Literacy in MTI Theses

According to the guidelines set by the CNCGETI (2015; 2024), the MTI training standards emphasize that theses should possess significant industry application value, which can, to some extent, reflect the quality of MTI graduates’ training. In the age of AI, the impact of emerging technologies on the translation industry is unprecedented. The cultivation of application-oriented translation professionals relies heavily on the quality of the MTI program. These professionals not only need to possess a solid theoretical knowledge base but should also have sufficient machine translation (MT) literacy. Ehrensberger-Dow, Delorme Benites and Lehr (2023, p. 394) state that “MT literacy and post-editing skills can prepare translators to cope with future developments in AI and language technology as well as to provide advice to clients when time and resources are too tight for prestige translation services.” If educational institutions are to successfully fulfil their mandate, their teaching must reflect the dynamic developments in the industry and market, preparing their students to function efficaciously in the multiple roles and

contexts of contemporary and future job markets, while seamlessly achieving their abiding academic objectives (Massey, Piotrowska & Marczak, 2023, p. 331).

Based on the knowledge mapping generated using CiteSpace and the emerging research focus, however, it is evident from the data collected in this study that there is a scarcity of content related to current hot foci in the translation industry within MTI theses in recent years. The most frequently cited topics within the translation industry and technology are artificial intelligence (Count 4) and machine translation (Count 2) without any mention related to computer-assisted translation (CAT), but CAT and computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) represent a significant new trend for the profession (Pastor, 2018). The infrequent citation of relevant topics reflects the current lack of application of translation technologies by MTI students in their thesis writing, case analysis, and practical use, which highlights a gap between academic research and the translation industry, suggesting a disconnect between thesis writing and real-world practice, which points to insufficient MT literacy among students.

4.2 Suggestions for Future Thesis Writing

4.2.1 Adjusting the Types of Thesis Writing

In regards to exploring the types of MTI thesis writing, it is suggested that referencing the latest edition of “*The Requirements 2024*” could provide insights for optimizing the writing process.

Based on the survey data obtained, it can be observed that most students prefer to adopt the translation practice report (97%) as their thesis writing type, with the core section being the “Case Analysis”. Therefore, “*The Requirements 2024*” has been adjusted to include the case analysis report, which encompasses both the translation practice report and the translation internship report. This adjustment not only reflects the practical-oriented training objectives of MTI programs but also considers the thesis writing process by providing a more streamlined approach, facilitating topic selection for both supervisors and students. The new document retains the translation survey report, mainly because survey reports can, to some extent, reflect the current status and issues in related fields such as the translation industry, translation education, and translation policies, thereby possessing

significant practical value. For instance, there are only slightly over 100 survey reports published in domestic journals, covering foci such as public discourse, translation teaching, curriculum design, translation competence, and translator training (Sun & Ren, 2019, p. 87). This indicates that there are still many potential survey foci in the field of translation studies.

In light of the new official document, it is worth noting that the MTI degree thesis no longer includes translation experiment reports and translation research papers. Based on the research findings, on one hand, fewer students currently adopt the writing type of translation experiment reports for their degree theses, and both experiment reports and research papers belong to academic-type papers, which do not align with the practical-oriented training objectives of MTI programs. The current practical-oriented training objectives of MTI result in students not receiving rigorous academic training, with inadequate training in research methodology and theory, thus rendering experiment reports and research papers no longer meeting the current MTI training goals. On the other hand, MTI students, especially Master of Translation students, have limited opportunities to engage in specific translation experiments, which has prevented the experiment report from becoming the mainstream type for the MTI degree thesis. The retention of the research paper writing in earlier documents is due to the late establishment of the MTI program, limited available training experiences to draw from, and the fact that early faculty members were predominantly traditional academics who were well-versed in research paper writing and guidance. The transition requires a gradual process and is essentially a compromise (Mu & Li, 2019, pp. 36-37).

However, current MTI degree theses have generally shifted towards a practice-oriented report (as stated in Section 4.1.1). After over a decade of exploration, MTI training has begun to highlight the characteristics of applied research in MTI, encompassing faculty expertise, writing experience, and research methodology. Therefore, research papers and the rarely adopted experiment reports no longer suffice to meet the current writing requirements for the MTI degree thesis. Therefore, it is recommended to adjust the future MTI thesis writing model to include case analysis reports (or practice reports) and survey reports:

Case analysis reports can be based on real or simulated translation practices, as well as translation issues or projects encountered during internships. From a professional translation perspective, the report should describe the background, context, and completion process of the case, analyze the problems, challenges, experiences, and insights encountered; and provide solutions to the problems by applying acquired professional knowledge.

Survey reports should focus on specific issues in the industry, such as translation policies, translation education, translation technology, etc. From a professional standpoint, the report should describe the survey background, survey subjects, survey instruments and methodology, survey process, and data. The acquired data should be comprehensively analyzed using professional knowledge, leading to conclusive findings.

4.2.2 Strengthening theoretical learning to optimize “Theoretical framework-based” report

The definition of translation theory, as well as the definitions of translation thoughts and translation concepts, need to be further emphasized in MTI education and training in order to standardize MTI thesis writing. While MTI programs tend to emphasize practical skills in their curriculum, this should not undermine the disciplinary significance of translation theory. It is essential to avoid neglecting or disregarding the value of theory in favour of emphasizing professionalization, vocational training, skill development, and market-oriented characteristics (Dong & Han, 2013, p. 127).

In previous official documents, such as “*The Guideline 2011*”, it was explicitly stated that degree theses should integrate theory and practice. However, in the latest “*Requirements 2024*”, the phrase “integration of theory and practice” is no longer present, indicating that the official documents no longer require the inclusion of a “Theoretical Framework” section in practice reports or survey reports. Some scholars also argue that “the ‘Theoretical Framework’ model is not suitable for MTI translation practice report, as it is fundamentally an unreasonable approach”. Han and Hou (2022, pp. 27-28) also believe that “‘practice report’ itself implies that it is

not a research paper and academic and theoretical aspects are not the pursued objectives, rendering a theoretical framework unnecessary.” But translation is a social activity that spans languages and cultures and needs to be explored from a methodological perspective (Sang, 2023, p. 244). Pérez (2004, p. 119) also argues that “translation trainees should be exposed to a variety of approaches to translation which are inspired by and connect to different theoretical schools so that students are in this way taught to be flexible in their approach to texts and will also learn theory in practical application”. Therefore, theoretical and academic rigour is an inherent characteristic of MTI theses. The theoretical aspect is not merely an embellishment imposed upon the practice report but rather an essential and intrinsic feature of the report. This theoretical dimension should embody a holistic, integrative approach, reflecting a bidirectional reflection between theory and practice (Li & Nan, 2024, p. 55).

Further, it is important to emphasize that although the MTI program trains professionals for the translation industry, this does not imply that the translation practice report should be devoid of theoretical reflection and guidance. The goal of the program and the focus of the thesis writing are to address practical issues in translation practice. Therefore, while MTI theses are practice-oriented reports, they must still adhere to academic writing standards, and should also demonstrate the appropriate application of theory and critical thinking. Taking the core section of a practice report, “Case Analysis,” as an example, MTI students should select representative examples, employ relatively scientific and rigorous research methods, adhere to certain academic standards, combine relevant theories to reflect on the examples, and find scientifically sound explanations or coping strategies for translation phenomena within the cases (Mu, Zou & Yang, 2012, p. 25).

On the other hand, Cao (2019, p. 2) argues that “translation theory is a systematic and rational understanding, derived from translation activities, of their occurrence, development, processes, outcomes, functions, impacts, as well as the participants involved in these activities, including the translator and other relevant actors.” Translation theory and practice are inherently interactive and mutually reinforcing. Translation theory originates from translation practice; it not only regulates and

guides practice but also describes and explains it. In this process of coordination, translation practice continually refines and addresses the limitations of theory. As stated by Li (2024, p. 61), “to a certain extent, practice can stimulate theoretical innovation. The goal of theoretical innovation is not to overturn existing theories but rather to engage in in-depth discourse and interpretation of focal issues emerging from practical contexts. This process aids in deepening people’s understanding of these issues.”

In conclusion, MTI education should strengthen theoretical learning, clearly distinguish between translation theories and translation concepts, and appropriately apply relevant theories to analyze specific translation cases. It should also emphasize critical theoretical thinking and adhere to academic writing standards in thesis composition. These efforts will not only demonstrate theoretical proficiency but also contribute to the development of the translation discipline by providing a solid foundation of case studies and theoretical insights.

4.2.3 Enhancing the MT Literacy of MTI Theses

In the era of globalization and informatization, the rapid and frequent flow of information between countries is essential for the smooth exchange of massive amounts of information. Feng and Cui (2016, p. 67) point out that “various types of translation are not only the fundamental premise for this global language service industry but also the core business within it.” CAT tools and editing software can decrease the load on translators’ working and long-term memory and release their cognitive resources for complex tasks by relieving them of repetitive and boring tasks (Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017, pp. 337, 340; Koskinen & Ruokonen, 2017, p. 14; O’Brien, 2012, pp. 105, 107). Machine translation has changed practices in language services provision. In some market sectors, translators are now required to use MT as a source of suggestions to be edited and incorporated into the final text (Vieira & Alonso, 2019, p. 163). At the end of November 2022, Open AI, an American artificial intelligence laboratory, introduced a new type of AI-driven natural language processing tool called Chat GPT. Representing a breakthrough in artificial intelligence, Chat GPT integrates advanced content generation technologies such as

machine translation, information extraction, copywriting generation, and code generation. It has brought unprecedented impact to the field of foreign language studies, particularly in translation practice and teaching (Wang, 2024, p. 5). As Chat GPT evolves and its training data is updated, it is expected to make further breakthroughs in translation practice, proofreading, polishing, and evaluation (Geng & Hu, 2023, p. 46).

Given the practical nature of translation, the breakdown of competencies and sub-competences required of translators establishes a natural bridge between academic and professional requirements in the field (Ramos, 2024, p. 148). The MTI thesis, as a key component in assessing the requirements and training of the MTI program, should also highlight a certain level of MT literacy. It serves as a solid foundation for entering the translation industry and enhancing critical thinking, as well as the application of translation technology tools. Taking the most common type of translation practice report in this survey as an example, MTI students specializing in translation could easily incorporate CAT or MT tools into their reports for proofreading or even compare the quality differences between machine-generated translations and human translations of the same text. This approach not only serves as a means of applying translation technology and enhancing MT literacy but also represents an innovative method in thesis writing.

While training and education in academic settings are important, they do not fully replicate real-world translation scenarios. With the establishment of Translation as an academic discipline and the growing popularity of the MTI program, strengthening the integration of MTI education with the translation industry will significantly enhance the development of professional skills and technical competence. This, in turn, will increase the practical relevance of MTI programs. Such integration is of crucial importance for the cultivation of high-level, applied, and specialized translation professionals (Dong & Han, 2013, p. 127). Therefore, it is crucial to encourage MTI students to engage more actively in real-life translation projects and translation management. By applying and mastering cutting-edge translation technologies, students can enhance their MT literacy, which will better equip them for entering the industry. Selecting materials from actual

translation internships or practical experiences, along with strategically incorporating translation tools, could contribute to empirical research in translation practice and lead to theses with greater societal relevance.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on the comprehensive results of the visual analysis and discussions outlined above, this study arrives at the following conclusions: a) Translation practice reports emerged as the most prevalent thesis type, followed by translation research papers. Internship reports, experiment reports, and survey reports exhibited lower proportions and narrower distribution; b) The surveyed theses primarily concentrate on translation studies, with text types following closely behind; c) Theoretical frameworks related to translation studies are frequently cited. Linguistics theories, particularly those related to contrastive analysis, are also included and applied; d) Research trends of these foci exhibit three major stages. Stage 1, spanning from 2013 to 2015, witnessed a period of notable and substantial growth. Stage 2, encompassing the years 2016 to 2019, represented a phase of steady and consistent expansion. Finally, Stage 3, commencing in 2020, exhibited a relatively modest level of increase.

This paper highlights several critical weaknesses in the composition of MTI theses that require urgent attention. First, there is a discrepancy between the five prescribed writing types and real-world writing preferences, suggesting a shift towards two types of thesis writing- case study reports and research reports- while excluding translation research papers and experimental reports, in alignment with the professional and specialized goals of the MTI program. Second, the confusion between translation theories and concepts necessitates a clearer definition and integration of these elements in MTI education, fostering students' theoretical knowledge and critical thinking skills. Finally, the inadequate integration of MT literacy in MTI thesis writing underscores the need for a more industry-oriented curriculum that emphasizes professional, practical, and vocational skills, with a focus on translation technologies and alignment with the demands of the AI era.

MTI thesis writing is a crucial component of MTI teaching and serves as a key measure of the quality of MTI education. The transitional visualization analysis presented in this paper clarifies the current status of MTI thesis writing and the existing deficiencies, providing insights for future research in MTI thesis writing and talent cultivation. Additionally, in conjunction with “*The Requirements 2024*”, this paper offers practical suggestions for MTI thesis writing to promote innovation in MTI teaching and enhance the quality of MTI talent development.

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