

# The relevance of translation theory for translator education today

NATAŠA PAVLOVIĆ

*University of Zagreb, Croatia*

*Amidst market-driven concerns about employability, is theory still relevant in translator education? Perceptions were sought from 62 MA students who attended, either online or on campus, a translation theory course that applied the “flipped classroom” model. Based on these insights, the author recommends including theory in translator education, ensuring a clear link to practice and fostering students’ critical engagement with both theoretical and professional issues. In this way, it is argued that theory can build future translators’ competence and confidence, preparing them for work in a changing profession.*

*Keywords: translation theory, translator education, flipped classroom*

## Introduction

This article deals with the relevance of translation theory in translator education today. Why today? What is so special about the present moment? The translation industry, together with other sectors, is undergoing a major transformation due to technological developments and the resulting changes in the workflows and business models (Sakamoto 2026). While the current technological revolution is not the first technology-related advancement to shape the translation industry (Pym and Torres-Simón 2021), the widespread application of neural machine translation and generative AI solutions is arguably having a qualitatively different impact on the translation profession, akin to that of the Industrial Revolution on manual labor (Ekpo 2025). The threat to the profession brought about by automation is compounded with accompanying trends such as commodification of translation, platformization of work, precarity, deteriorating working conditions, and a “race to the bottom” with respect to pay (Moorkens 2017; Moorkens 2020; Firat and Şahin 2026). These conditions associated with the “digital neo-Taylorist workspace” are not restricted to the translation industry, and they are not

merely new tools and business practices causing a “gradual devaluation of human experience” (Baumgarten and Bourgadel 2024: 519). Their impact on human lives is such that it is not overly dramatic to say that they invite redefining of “what it means to be human” (Ekpo 2025: 19).

What does this mean for higher education in general, and for humanities in particular? Higher education in humanities is undoubtedly in crisis, and has been for some time, struggling to attract students, improve rankings and secure funds (Guyer 2024). Some of the reasons behind the crisis in higher education are the same as those reshaping the translation industry mentioned above: the widespread use of generative AI, purporting to make even the creative aspects of academic inquiry redundant, and the neoliberal, profit-oriented policies focusing on quantifiable performance (Hayward 2024). A university degree alone does not guarantee success in the labor market, where the focus is on specific skills and adaptability. Some universities, especially those in the humanistic, liberal arts vein, tend to turn a blind eye to these trends, unwilling to “get their hands dirty” with concerns such as student “employability”<sup>2</sup>, and preferring to hold onto the status quo and time-honored traditions. Such an approach leaves students unprepared for the job market and susceptible to exploitation until they acquire concrete skills in the workplace. Young people sense this and are uninterested in something for which they see no purpose. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those universities, including many translator training programs, which have undergone one reform after another in attempts to “skate to where the puck is going, not to where it is” (Welocalize 2023), with varying degrees of success. For some of them, these efforts to bridge the gap between the industry and academia have meant focusing predominantly, if not exclusively, on the practical aspects of translating, without much space in the curriculum for theory. Given what translation is today, and what a wide range of “core” and “adjacent” language services (Angelone 2026a) the industry covers, this is not surprising. With so many specific skills and competences required “to produce a transversal skill set to equip graduates for the future” (EMT 2022: 2), there does not seem to be time for “slow scholarship” (Nørgård, Bosanquet, and Grant 2024).

Innovative and creative methods such as project-based learning, simulated translation bureaus, work placements, mentorship schemes or interprofessional training have transformed translator education, bringing it closer to the real-life conditions in the industry and enabling a smoother integration of graduates in the labor market. However, theory, where it is taught, seems to have mainly retained traditional delivery methods, such as “ex cathedra” lectures. Such instructional models additionally undermine the potential usefulness of theory and research, with practitioners and students

---

<sup>2</sup> For a recent overview of the concept of employability in the context of translator education, see Hao (2026).

wondering how/whether theory can help them (Chesterman and Wagner 2002; Pym and Torres-Simón 2016). For students, the seemingly insurmountable divide between theory and practice makes theoretical courses detached from the realities of the professional communities they strive to join upon graduation. However, previous research has shown that students are not necessarily averse towards translation theory as such, but that their perceptions depend on how it is delivered and on the extent to which theory helps them become better translators (Pym and Torres-Simón 2016; Ordóñez López and Agost 2022).

What, then, is the place of theory in higher education today? Should it be included in study programs and how should it be taught? I will attempt to address this question by using the example of a translation theory course, which can serve as a case study for other theoretical courses in the humanities, and possibly in other fields of knowledge as well.

## Methodology

The Translation Theory course that forms the background of this study is part of the Translation Stream of the graduate (MA) study program in the Department of English, University of Zagreb. This semester-long course is obligatory for the Translation Stream students (usually 20-30 per cohort), and it can also be taken as an elective course by other students interested in translation (usually no more than 5-6 students). The course starts with an overview of translation types and translation-like activities as well as a brief introduction to translation tools and resources, and basics of terminology. The content related more strictly to translation theory includes the following: introduction to translation theory and translation studies; linguistic approaches to translation – non-correspondences between language systems, equivalence theories, translation shifts, procedures and strategies, with special emphasis on cultural references, idioms, language variations (e.g. translation of dialect); functionalist approaches to translation – *skopos* theory; Descriptive Translation Studies, with emphasis on norms; cultural turn in translation studies – feminist and post-colonial approaches, and Venuti; the technological turn – the impact of technology on translation theory and practice; translation ethics. The course also features a visit by former students, who present their experiences in the translation industry since graduation, addressing student questions related to the profession and technology similar to those raised by students in Pym and Torres-Simón (2016). Outside of the Translation Theory course itself, the four-semester Translation Stream includes courses on specialized translation, administrative/legal translation, translation for the EU, audiovisual and literary translation, localization and translation technology, as well as linguistic courses and courses on anglophone literatures. Some of these courses are obligatory, but most are placed in groups from which

students choose one, according to their preferences. The study program ends with an MA thesis in the form of a research or translation project.

During the period under study, three cohorts of students attended the Translation Theory course, one in the online environment, during the COVID pandemic (winter semester of 2020/2021, 38 students) and two in the classroom (winter semesters of 2023/24 and 2024/25, a total of 56 students). Of those 94 students, 62 (66%) responded to the questionnaire survey, 30 from the online cohort (Group O) and 32 from the face-to-face cohort (Group F). No responses were excluded.

The teaching method used in both conditions was the “flipped classroom” (Bergmann and Sams 2012). I provide more details of this method and my application of it in a previous article (Pavlović 2021), where I report on the results from the online condition, or more precisely, from “emergency remote teaching” (Hodges et al. 2020), as experienced by Group O. In the current follow-up study, data related to Group F are added in order to investigate whether the same instructional model could be applied in a face-to-face environment with equal success, and what conclusions can be drawn from this. The flipped classroom model itself, while not brand new, is still novel in the higher education setting. To briefly describe the model as I used it, most lectures were displaced from the synchronous classes; instead, students were required to watch a video at home, of an average duration of around 30 minutes, and either complete a related translation assignment or participate in an online forum discussion. The synchronous classes were then dedicated to further discussion and elaboration of the topics dealt with in the videos and the assignments or online forums. The synchronous time also included additional tasks done in smaller groups (3-4 students), and then jointly commented on by the whole class. Synchronous classes took place over Zoom for Group O, and in the classroom for Group F.

The questionnaire used with Group O is provided in Appendix 2 of Pavlović (2021). Group F was administered the same questionnaire with minimal changes (e.g. the formulation “Zoom discussions” being replaced with “classroom work”). In both cases, the questionnaire was anonymous, and it was filled out by the participants at the end of the coursework and before the exam.

For the closed questions, the results were analyzed quantitatively, using JASP for the descriptive statistics and the t-tests. The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively, using the thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke 2006). When cited, the participants from Group O are labelled as GO 1–30, while those from Group F are labelled as GF 1–32. Since the course was delivered in English, the questionnaire was in English, and the responses were also in English. When cited, the responses are presented verbatim, including occasional errors.

## Results

### *Overall evaluation of the course*

The overall evaluation of the course was elicited in four ways: 1) in comparison with other theoretical courses; 2) in terms of the participants' self-assessment of engagement in the course; 3) through self-assessment of how much they learned in the course; and 4) how likely they were to recommend the course to their peers.

### *Comparison with other theoretical courses*

Firstly, the participants were asked to compare the present course with other theoretical courses they had had during their university studies. They were specifically asked to rate the delivery method used in the course rather than the course content. The participants could choose one of the following options: “the delivery of this course was much better than other theoretical courses”, “the delivery of this course was better than other theoretical courses”, “the delivery of this course was as good as other theoretical courses”, “the delivery of other theoretical courses was better than that of this course” or “the delivery of other theoretical courses was much better than that of this course.”

Fifty-two of the 62 participants rated the delivery of this course as “better” or “much better” than that of other theoretical courses, while only one person rated it as inferior to other courses (Table 1). In Group O, 28 of the 30 participants considered the course to have had a “better” or “much better” delivery than comparable courses, while in Group F, 24 of the 32 participants expressed this opinion.

**Table 1:** Comparison with other theoretical courses in terms of delivery

	Much better than others	Better than others	As good as others	Others better	Others much better	Total
Group O	14	14	2	0	0	30
Group F	16	8	7	1	0	32
Total	30	22	9	1	0	62

When asked to elaborate on their responses, the participants of both groups stressed the link between “theory” and “practice” that, in their opinion, this course promoted:

Most theoretical courses are purely theoretical, that is, without any tasks or assignments to make students apply the theoretical knowledge they receive in the course, which I think is not very helpful. (GO23)

Usually theoretical courses are very boring because it's mostly the professor regurgitating facts and expecting us to memorize everything,

but in this course we had example exercises, various activities, discussions, etc. so the overall experience was immensely better. (GF5)

I'm not a big fan of theoretical courses, but in this case the choice of what's important was *actually* important and pretty clearly explained. Combined with having translation tasks and discussions for certain topics, I feel like I've actually remembered a good deal of things. (GF21)

I found that I remembered things much easily and quickly, thanks to the approach, classroom discussions, relevant homework. (GF31)

Some participants explicitly comment on the instructional method as contributing to the present course being better than comparable courses:

Theoretical courses are usually pretty boring, but this one is different, because it employs other forms of teaching, not just talking about a topic. I think that group assignments and videos are the best parts of this course and are what makes better than most other theoretical courses. (GF8)

In the participants' opinion, this type of delivery makes the course more dynamic and enhances the students' motivation:

I think you did a great job with making the course more dynamic (using the methods mentioned above), so it didn't feel purely theoretical and dry, which is often the case with courses on theory. (GF20)

[In other theoretical courses] the students barely stay awake and have no motivation at all. (GF29)

A more active dynamic and interactive environment helps with staying focused. (GF32)

Unlike in the study by Ordóñez López and Agost (2022), the participants highlight the course promoting critical thinking, as illustrated by these comments:

Other theoretical courses usually consist of memorizing what other people said in a certain period of time on a certain topic, while this course focused on critical thinking. (GO15)

The goal of the course was not to memorize the definitions, classifications or authors, but to think critically about everything. [...] I think that because of such a model of classes I will retain everything we did for much longer in my memory than if I'd only had to cram. (GO26)

*Self-assessment of student engagement*

Table 2 shows the participants' self-assessment of engagement in the course. In total, 39 of the 62 participants were actively engaged, either often or occasionally, while the remaining 23 listened but rarely spoke. One of the 19 Group F participants who chose the second option ("Listened actively and occasionally spoke"), added a note explaining that the description was mostly true of them, but that there were also days when their mind was completely elsewhere. In the interest of transparency, this is indicated in Table 2, in brackets.

**Table 2:** Participants' self-assessment of engagement

	Often actively participated	Listened actively, occasionally spoke	Listened but rarely spoke	Listened only "with one ear"	Did not listen
Gr. O	4	13	13	0	0
Gr. F	3	19 (18)	10	0	0 (1)
<i>Total</i>	7	32	23	0	0

*Self-assessment of learning*

The participants were asked to assess how much they had learned about translation in this course on a 1–5 scale (1 = "almost nothing new or useful"; 5 = "a lot of new and useful stuff"). As can be seen from Table 3, only two participants chose the middle point, and no one gravitated towards the lower end of the scale. The differences between the groups were minimal.

**Table 3:** Self-assessment of learning

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3	Point 4	Point 5	Total
Group O	0	0	1	7	22	30
Group F	0	0	1	10	21	32
<i>Total</i>	0	0	2	17	43	62

*Recommendation of the course*

The fourth element of the participants' overall evaluation of the course was obtained when they were asked to what extent they would recommend the course to colleagues who wished to become translators. Sixty-one of the 62 participants strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend the course even if it were not obligatory, with Group O agreeing slightly more strongly (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Recommendation of the course

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3	Point 4	Point 5	Total
Group O	0	0	0	4	26	30
Group F	0	0	1	8	23	32
<i>Total</i>	0	0	1	12	49	62

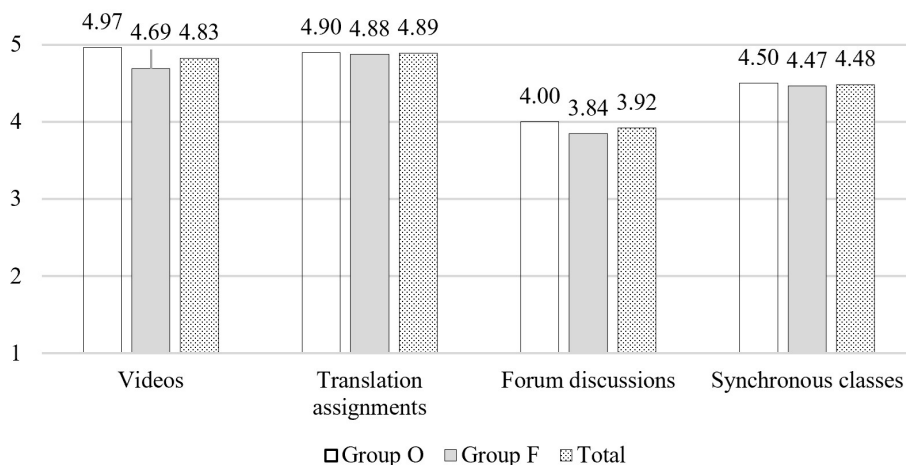
### *Evaluation of course components*

#### *Quantitative evaluation of course components*

One of the questions in the survey asked the participants to rate the four components of the course described in Section 2: the videos, the translation assignments, the forum discussions, and the synchronous classes via Zoom (Group O) or in the classroom (Group F). The usefulness of each element was rated on a Likert-type 1–5 scale, where 1 meant “not at all useful” and 5 “very useful” (Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows the results for Group O (white), Group F (grey) and the combined results (pattern). As can be seen, the videos and the translation assignments received the highest scores (mean = 4.83 and 4.89 respectively), while the forum discussions were rated slightly lower (mean = 3.92). We look at the reasons for the latter result below. The synchronous classes were also rated very positively, as useful to very useful (mean = 4.48).

**Figure 1:** Evaluation of course components



The chart also shows that participants in Group F rated all the course components slightly less enthusiastically than their counterparts in Group O. In the case of the videos, the difference was statistically significant on an independent two-sample t-test ( $p < .05$ ). Group O attended the course in extraordinary circumstances, with both their studies and their lives in general being severely constrained by the pandemic. We can therefore speculate that the use of an innovative teaching method would have meant more to them than to their colleagues studying under normalized conditions. In this respect, the results of Group F can be thought of as more realistic. It is indicative that an important aspect of Group O’s impressions of this course was related to the perceived “support” they received in the course (Pavlović 2021), while this

notion was not brought up, either directly or indirectly, in the responses of Group F.

In any case, the overall mean scores ranging from 3.92 for the forum discussions to 4.83 for the videos can be described as a very positive evaluation. Below, I present the qualitative results related to each of the components.

### *Qualitative evaluation of course components*

*The videos.* Among the advantages of the videos, participants highlighted their availability, and the fact that they could be re-watched at any time (GO4, GO16, GO17, GO30, GF8, GF10). The videos were described as entertaining (GO4, GO9, GO19, GO28, GF13), informative (GO7, GO29), creative (GO18, GF29), shorter than traditional lectures (GO29), and easier to follow (GF13). Here are some statements about the videos in the participants' own words:

I liked being able to watch the video lectures (and the fact that I could watch them multiple times) (GO17)

I found the videos to be a great way of presenting course topics. I think they definitely made the class more fun and they are easier to follow than standard lectures. (GF13)

The videos are extremely helpful because we can watch them on our own time and thus understand the matter better. (GF10)

[The videos] were very creative and I was excited to see what you would come up with next! (F29)

The participants spontaneously brought up the role of the videos in freeing up the time for discussion in contact lessons, which is the main tenet of the flipped classroom model:

The videos were a great way of covering the theoretical part of the course, while leaving time to cover concrete, practical tasks and examples in the classroom. I believe it is more useful to use the in-person lessons for discussions. (GF11)

The videos were very useful because I could watch them when most convenient, and they allowed us to be prepared for class so we could just talk about the material. (GF5)

I really like that the professor had videos we had to watch at home and in class we only discussed real life situations that were relevant to that video rather than only studying theory. (GF19)

Only one participant, from Group F, said they would have preferred to be given reading assignments to videos.<sup>3</sup> As described in Pavlović (2021), the videos used in this course were made specifically for the course by the author, in the COVID-19 pandemic conditions. In the absence of such content, any available videos could be used, or indeed reading material. Since previous research has shown that students may find it a challenge to benefit from translation theory when the “density and volume” of reading materials is perceived to be too high (Ordóñez López and Agost 2022), the videos might be considered a suitable medium for facilitating and motivating students’ engagement with complex theoretical concepts. This approach can be used to nudge students towards tackling more dense research articles when they have built appropriate foundations.

*The translation assignments.* The participants place the translation assignments among the most useful and enjoyable activities done in the course, stating that they helped them to understand and retain theoretical knowledge, as well as to apply it to real-life situations:

The assignments usually nicely complemented the videos and helped me see how the knowledge provided worked in practice. (GO19)

Assignments involving translation tasks are great and a useful way of showing how theory can be used in actual translations. (GF4)

Assignments were also very useful because it was easier to understand the theory after applying it to a particular task. (GO25)

I think this class has a very good balance of the more straightforward theory learning and practical assignments which help put that theory to use. (GF12)

It is much more useful to make the theory just the basis for doing practical tasks rather than theory being the only thing discussed and worked on in the course. (GF11)

The assignments also served to develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity:

Practical assignments encourage problem solving and critical thinking and they can help us with recognizing the learned material in real-life situations. (GO4)

[The assignments] let us show our creativity and were useful in giving insight into different translation techniques. (GF15)

The coursework was very diverse and encouraged creativity. (GF6)

---

<sup>3</sup> It should be mentioned that, for one of the topics (cultural turn in translation studies), a reading assignment was used instead of a video.

Most of these assignments involved experimental translations and translations that took the students outside of their comfort zone, such as song translation, translation of dialect, translation of idioms involving word play, translation of advertisements, translation of a text with many cultural references, etc. This was done in a safe environment and without the pressure of grades, since the assignments were obligatory for the students, but not graded as such. In other words, “the students translate as a process of testing and discovery, not as a training practice in itself” (Pym and Torres-Simón 2016: 199). Such experiments with unpredictable outcomes are something students will be rarely able to afford once they have graduated and started working for clients, but they can nevertheless be seen as an “upfront investment that can ultimately optimize work performance” (Angelone 2026b: 29).

*The forum discussions.* Forum discussions were used in this course to accompany the videos, especially those dealing with content less amenable to application through translation assignments (e.g. norm-based theories, cultural turn in translation studies, translation ethics, the impact of technology). The students were asked to watch a video and respond to a set of questions posed by the teacher to prompt discussion or ask their own questions and respond to their colleagues’. The main issues were then taken up in the synchronous classes.

The forum discussions provided the opportunity for students to hear the opinions of their peers:

The forum assignments were really interesting, because I was able to see my colleagues’ opinions and comments on various subjects and learn a lot from them as well. (GO10)

The forum discussions and creative translation tasks were really interesting and fun to do. (GF31)

I usually don’t like these types of assignments, but the ones done in this class were very good [...]. It was also interesting to read about different opinions and experiences my colleagues had. (GO30)

I liked the forum discussions; I thought they would be stilted and a waste of time, but I ended up really enjoying reading my colleagues’ ideas and responding to them. (GO23)

They were also a suitable venue where those who do not like to speak in front of the group could express their views:

[Forum discussions] really motivated students like me who struggle with class participation to still express their thoughts and opinions. (GF6)

At the same time, the participants' responses to the open-ended questions help explain why the forum discussions received slightly lower marks than the other three types of activities used in the course:

Forum assignments were very interesting because they made me think more deeply about the course material, but sometimes it was a bit difficult to follow the discussion, especially when a lot of answers were posted at the same time (at the last minute). (GO25)

I was always overwhelmed by the number of opinions and responses, that I never managed to give them a proper look. (GO14)

The forum assignments were doomed to be repetitive by nature. Our opinions didn't vary that much, everyone kind of copy-pasted responses from other students and re-did them a bit. (GO28)

As far as forums go, I feel like they were a bit less useful for me personally, because I often did the assignments in a rush and wouldn't take time to read everyone's input. (F8)

I dislike the forum option because the discussions become too official, more focused on the way things are said and less on what is actually being said. (GF18)

[I]t did sometimes feel a bit unnecessary to take part in the forum discussions since other students had already mentioned many points and I couldn't find anything new or interesting to add. (GF20)

One of the problems associated with the forum discussions was the platform on which they were conducted. Students seem to be used to more modern-looking user interfaces than those offered by the Moodle e-course, as can be seen from these comments:

Due to the [Moodle] forum being somewhat clumsy, the discussions in the forum came off rigid at times, with people talking past each other and repeating some of the points that had already been made. (GO12)

Upgrades to the use of the forum would be beneficial, but that has more to do with [Moodle] as a platform. (GO1)

Forum discussions are a good idea, but for me personally, [Moodle] forums are not quite ideal for a developed conversation. (GF10)

Alternative platforms should be sought to facilitate written discussion among course participants, as it has the potential to enrich the exchange of knowledge and prepare the ground for oral discussion in the synchronous classes.

*The synchronous classes.* Regarding the synchronous component of the course, the comments were overwhelmingly positive, with the participants being pleased with the "relaxed" (GO10, GF6), "positive" (GO10), "nice and friendly" (GO10), and "welcoming" (GO19) atmosphere, which fostered

interaction and engagement (GF15). The participants furthermore welcomed the opportunity to hear different perspectives and opinions from their peers. These are some of the comments about the synchronous classes:

Classroom work and discussions were also very productive, and the relaxed atmosphere made them more enjoyable. (GF6)

The positive atmosphere was probably the biggest plus in my book, because it allowed me to be relaxed and attend lectures without a knot in my stomach (which is not the case with other subjects). (GO10)

The atmosphere was always nice and friendly and it felt like we were all hanging out while talking about translation theory. (GO10)

I like that there was more interaction in this course. By discussing the topic we were able to really think about the information we got and it was more engaging. (GF15)

Although I did not always have something to contribute to the discussions, I found them very useful because I heard many new perspectives on translation issues that I had not considered before. (GO12)

[Y]ou made Zoom a very welcoming space and gave everyone a chance to speak. I felt heard and like my opinions and thoughts mattered and it was nice to hear colleagues express their own views and opinions. (GO19)

There was also a lot of feedback and in-class discussion which I think helped me fix certain things I was doing wrong and see different perspectives. (GF22)

I liked the discussions via the forum and Zoom because, when I had to think about a topic and develop my own opinion, it became clearer straight away, and generally in this way I was able to remember the content better, when I had to think about it. (GO26)

As reported in Pavlović (2021), some participants who attended synchronous classes in the online environment mentioned that the quieter students were not able “to get a word in” (GO20) because the more assertive students tended to dominate the discussion. It was suggested that the teacher should moderate the discussion more actively (GO4). On the other hand, calling out students by name to participate in discussions can be a source of anxiety for some students in both the online and classroom environments, as witnessed by these two comments respectively:

What I loved most about [the Zoom discussions] was that the professor did not call us out by name to answer questions, we could participate in the discussions freely, how, when, and if we wanted (this was actually my favorite Zoom class because of that very reason, I felt very anxious and on edge in the rest of the zoom lectures in other subjects, and that

experience influenced my online classes experience the most, in a negative way). (GO10)

Thank you for not calling out names during in-class discussions (GF18)

It can therefore be a challenge for the teachers to strike the right balance between being too intrusive or too laissez-faire in their approach to discussion moderation, with personal preferences and character traits playing an important role.

### *The perceived benefits of the course*

Based on the responses to open-ended questions, the major benefits that the course offered can be divided into two overarching categories: the immediate usefulness of theoretical knowledge for the improvement of translation competence, and the forward-looking relevance for the future.

The first category encompasses the acquisition of the conceptual apparatus necessary for thinking about and discussing translation (putting thoughts into words, learning how to back translation solutions with arguments); broadening one's perspective and viewing translation in a new way; critical thinking; the ability to apply theories in practice; and confidence in applying theory. Here are some illustrative examples:

[The course] has been useful by helping me put the ways I translate into words and opening my eyes to other ways something can be translated. (GF15)

I've learned a lot about the theoretical background of translation [...], which helped me learn how to express my own opinion with proper arguments and examples. (GO14)

It was interesting to learn about translation theory and the various ways scholars have described the process of translation. It challenged a lot of preconceived notions I had, and I think I now have a much better picture of what translation is. (GO25)

[The course] made me realise that there is much more to translation than just translating. (GO15)

It made me start thinking about translation in different ways and having more of an open mind. (GF5)

It reminds the student that they are part of a scientific community and invites them to approach the theory in a critical way (GO12)

It made us think about how we can apply in practice all the theoretical knowledge that we gained. (GO30)

I was introduced to actual procedures and strategies used by translators (which I have used before in my studies, but wasn't aware of them)

that made me feel more competent and equipped as a translator. (GF31)

It broadened my scope of the translation profession. It helped me to be more professional and thoughtful, and enabled me to explain my approach to translation. (GF1)

The second category of benefits from the course relates more to the future and the relevance of the course for the real world. This category includes points such as being prepared for the future (particularly how to handle challenging situations, guidance in choosing the future area of specialization); expectations of the translator's role and responsibilities; and insights into the development of the profession, especially as related to the impact of technology. The following comments are illustrative of this category:

I learned a lot about Translation Studies in general and the theory behind my future profession. I believe this will help me choose what line of work I wish to do once I graduate. (GO11)

I gained a clearer picture of what I would like to do once I graduate. (GO30)

I liked that the tasks were relevant to real life situations in which we will find ourselves. I really feel this class prepared me for the future, in some aspects, even better than the translation exercises. (GF19)

[The course] served as an excellent introduction to translation theory, it introduced key concepts and issues that I will continue to use and think about throughout my translation experience. It also made me think about the role and the accountability of the translator. (GO12)

I became aware of what is expected [...] and how to deal with complicated situations we can experience as translators. (GF19)

I learned about some useful concepts that I find will be helpful in my future endeavours. (GF17)

It was useful in that a lot of practical examples were offered, which helped me to get acquainted with the real-world situations in which I may find myself one day. (GF23)

I thought a lot about translation and language development and technological development, and how it will influence our career in the future. (GF7)

It is clear from these comments that the course has helped students gain a better knowledge of translation as their chosen profession and to improve their confidence as translators, which are crucial factors in the development of their professional identity (Singer 2022).

### *Limitations of the study*

The present study, while offering rich data on student perceptions of the course under investigation, also has many limitations. One of them is the self-selection bias: while the response rate of around 66% is quite good, it is possible that students who were more satisfied with the course were more inclined to complete the questionnaire, leading to more favorable results. Furthermore, like other self-report studies, this study relies solely on the participants' perception of the course benefits for their translation competence, the development of which was not assessed for the purposes of this study. Finally, this was a case study involving a single course with a single instructor in a very specific setting and no attempts at controlling the variables.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study have shown that translation theory can be highly appreciated by students, who can see its usefulness and its relevance at a time when they are justifiably concerned about employability and the future of the profession. Even the most informed teachers and curriculum developers cannot predict the technologies that will be used in the future, the skills they will require and the forms of employment they will beget. But, to cite Angelone (2026b: 28), one thing that can be expected to remain constant amidst incessant change is “the need for translators to critically reflect on, assess, and optimize their own performance.” Or, in the words of Pym and Torres-Simón (2016: 197), “Sooner or later, some creativity and critical thought is called for. And stimulations for inquiring minds, from research or theory, can nudge those processes along.” I would therefore argue that, regardless of what translation profession will look like in the future – or indeed, what other career path students will end up choosing – having the ability to tackle complex theoretical concepts and apply them in practice, to think critically, back their solutions with arguments, and make ethical decisions will help students navigate the challenges of the changing labor markets. These are precisely the advantages of a humanities university education that are coming to the fore today, in the era of overly narrow specializations and uncritical use of technological solutions in workplaces.

My experience with this course has shown that the divide between theory and practice is largely a construct bred from years of suboptimally designed curricula and not an inevitable dichotomy. Rather than opposites, theory and practice can be mobilized as complementary types of engagement with knowledge creation, with more theoretical or more practical aspects being brought to the foreground at different points within the course or indeed a single class or assignment. Such an approach builds on Schön's (1987) notion

of “reflective practice”, which has been very influential in my own development as a teacher. As Pym and Torres-Simón (2016: 199) say, “theory is no longer a set of irrelevant things to learn but becomes, in the more optimistic scenario, a way of enabling discussions [and] reasoned dissent.” However, these two authors argue for a “limited role of theory” (in the sense of “theorization”), which is marshalled at points when students run into difficulties or conflicting perspectives, “in a process that need be pursued only for as long as the learning collectivity has interest and energy” (Pym and Torres-Simón 2016: 199). I agree that such an approach is indeed resourceful, but it might be better suited for courses at lower levels (e.g. BA) or in situations where the course has a very limited number of contact hours. I would argue that the present study has shown that we can expect more from students at the MA level, especially when there is enough time in the course to tackle whole theories rather than only some theoretical concepts that may be useful for the task at hand.

However, what this study has also shown is that students’ positive views of translation theory depend to a large extent on the instructional model used in a course. In this paper, I have argued that a model which fosters student engagement, autonomy and experimentation, blurring the lines between theory and practice, such as the flipped classroom model described here, is closely related to students’ acceptance of a theoretical course. The flipped classroom model has the advantage of being easy to adapt to the course content, the number of hours, the students’ needs, the teacher’s preferences, and so on, but this is not to say that other innovative pedagogical designs could not be used in its place. With universities facing a crisis, both curriculum developers and the teaching staff will have to devise creative ways to keep higher education relevant in the years to come.

### **Declaration of AI use**

The author did not use any AI-assisted tools in the preparation of this manuscript.

### **References**

- Angelone, Erik. 2026a. “Diversification and portfolio careers”. In C. Walker and J. Lambert (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of the Translation Industry*. London and New York: Routledge. 307-320.
- Angelone, Erik. 2026b. “Generative AI as a facilitator of deliberate practice in translator training”. In J. C. Penet, J. Moorkens and M. Yamada (eds). *Teaching Translation in the Age of Generative AI: New Paradigm, New Learning?* Berlin: Language Science Press. 27-47.

- Baumgarten, Stefan, and Carole Bourgadel. 2024. "Digitalisation, neo-Taylorism and translation in the 2020s". *Perspectives* 32(3): 508-523.
- Bergmann, Jonathan, and Aaron Sams. 2012. *Flip your classroom. Reach every student in every class every day*. Arlington, VA: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using thematic analysis in psychology". *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77-101.
- Chesterman, Andrew, and Emma Wagner. 2002. *Can Theory Help Translators? A Dialogue Between the Ivory Tower and the Wordface*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ekpo, Eno Ubong. 2025. "The role of philosophy in translators' response to automation". *Bridge: Trends and Traditions in Translation and Interpreting Studies* 6(1): 8-28.
- European Master's in Translation (EMT). 2022. *Competence Framework*. [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/emt\\_competence\\_fw\\_2022\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/emt_competence_fw_2022_en.pdf).
- Firat, Gökhan, and Mehmet Şahin. 2026. "Platform economy models in the translation industry". In C. Walker and J. Lambert (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of the Translation Industry*. London and New York: Routledge. 290-306.
- Guyer, Sara. 2024. "Director's Report: Strategies for Persistence in a World under Duress". World Humanities Report, Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI). <https://worldhumanitiesreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/WHR-DirectorsReport.pdf>
- Hao, Yu. 2026. "Employability and translator education". In C. Walker and J. Lambert (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of the Translation Industry*. London and New York: Routledge. 496-510.
- Hayward, Katy. 2024. "Machine unlearning: AI, neoliberalism and universities in crisis". *Red Pepper* 245. <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/culture-media/technology/machine-unlearning-ai-neoliberalism-and-universities-in-crisis/>
- Hodges, Charles, Stephanie Moore, Barb Lockee, Torrey Trust, and Aaron Bond. 2020. "The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning". *EDUCAUSE review*. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remoteteaching-and-online-learning>.
- Moorkens, Joss. 2017. "Under pressure: translation in times of austerity". *Perspectives* 25(3): 464-477.
- Moorkens, Joss. 2020. "'A tiny cog in a large machine'. Digital Taylorism in the translation industry". *Translation Spaces* 9(1): 12-34.
- Nørgård, Rikke Toft, Agnes Bosanquet, and Barbara M. Grant. 2024. "The slow scholar in the accelerated university: Slowness as solidarity". In P. Gibbs, V. de Rijke, and A. Peterson (eds) *The Contemporary Scholar in Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 133-153.

- Ordóñez López, Pilar, and Rosa Agost. 2022. "Future translators' views on translation theory: a qualitative approach". *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 16(2): 158-176.
- Pavlović, Nataša. 2021. "'It felt like we were all hanging out while talking about translation theory': Lessons learned from a flipped translation theory course in emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic". *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E* 8: 31-85.
- Pym, Anthony, and Ester Torres-Simón. 2021. "Is automation changing the translation profession?" *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 270: 39-57.
- Pym, Anthony, and Ester Torres-Simón. 2016. "Designing a course in Translation Studies to respond to students' questions". *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 10(2): 183-203.
- Sakamoto, Akiko. 2026. "Changing practices in the translation industry". In C. Walker and J. Lambert (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of the Translation Industry*. London and New York: Routledge. 26-39.
- Schön, Donald. 1987. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Singer, Néstor. 2022. "How committed are you to becoming a translator? Defining translator identity statuses". *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 16(2): 141-157.
- Welocalize. 2023. "Embracing disruption in the language services industry". *Slator*. <https://slator.com/embracing-disruption-in-the-language-services-industry/> Visited May 2026.