

Approaches to Thesis Topic Selection for Translation Majors under Industry-Education Integration

Zhulin Han, Haiyi Sun, Xue Han

School of Applied English, Mudanjiang Normal University, Mudanjiang, China

Abstract

Industry-education integration has been identified as an important element in China's higher education reform. Unfortunately, the topic selection in translation programs often fails to integrate structural elements, such as too much academia and inadequate industry. Issues with this process tend to be homogeneity, lack of practical relevance, and lack of collaboration between schools and enterprises. Based on industry-education integration, this paper diagnoses the present condition and existing issues regarding topic selection in translation programs and further explores how to develop theoretical foundation and implementation path of reform. This research shows that industry-education integration implies the following three changes: knowledge transfer into problem solving, linguistic conversion into competence-knowledge integration, and terminal evaluation into whole-course integration. Consequently, the three-dimensional framework "industry needs-pedagogy adaptation-student development" is proposed, and reform paths at four levels are outlined: mechanisms of institutions, topic resources, process management, and competence cultivation.

Keywords

Industry-education integration; translation majors; thesis topic selection.

1. Introduction

Under the background of globalization, translators are not merely language translators but also important channels between Chinese culture and industry and foreign culture and industry. Their training is no longer a simple process of language skill development; rather, it has become an integral part of cultivating soft power that serves national strategies (Deng Ying, 2026: 11). Besides having a strong bilingual ability, graduates who majored in translation are also required to have communication abilities, industrial adaptation ability, and technology application ability, which may present new requirements for the undergraduate thesis, the reflection of talent training ability.

Meanwhile, as one of the core strategies in China's higher education reform, the integration of industry and education is transitioning from conceptual advocacy to institutional practice. Looking ahead, the key to driving talent training reform through industry-education integration lies in breaking through the rigid constraints of existing institutional frameworks within higher education and advancing a paradigm shift in talent cultivation models through systemic transformation (Yang Baocheng & Liu Yarong, 2026: 88). To deepen the industry and education cooperation will depend on achieving a balance between supply and demand, resource transformation, value exchange, and benefit-sharing, thus realizing talent training from "incorporation" to "interconnection" and finally to "integration."

The 2024-2035 master plan on building China into a leading country in education, issued in 2025 by the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council, further emphasizes the need to "improve mechanisms for aligning talent cultivation with the needs of

economic and social development,” providing clear policy guidance for pedagogical reform in translation programs.

However, a discrepancy still exists in the choice of topics in translation for undergraduate theses, which is manifested in the phenomenon of favoring theoretical investigation over practical work. Previous literature suggests that undergraduate thesis topics in translation should center on practice, based on three basic principles: "narrow and intensive research focus," "practice-based with case studies," and "relevance and significance." In actual practice, however, problems including topic uniformity, deviation from industrial needs, and absence of effective collaboration between schools and enterprises have been identified frequently. Topic selection for theses in translation programs from the perspective of industry-education integration has therefore become one of the critical issues for pedagogical reform.

2. Current State of Thesis Topic Selection in Translation Programs

The thesis in a translation program serve as a capstone project in which learners will utilize their existing knowledge and put it into practice through solving practical translation challenges. The mission of translation programs is twofold: first, to meet the market demand for high-quality translation professionals; second, to cultivate research-oriented talents to develop translation as an independent discipline (Hou Yixi, 2013: 161). With regard to the principle of industry education cooperation, there are three essential features which any chosen topic should have. First, there should be its practical character and relevance as it arises from particular text types, translation situations, or cross-cultural challenges. Second, topics are expected to address practical challenges related to the real world and solve them. For example, they can focus on improving post-editing performance or avoiding errors in translating cultural concepts. Third, topics should connect course learning, professional internships, and career development, serving as a comprehensive yardstick for assessing talent training quality.

In terms of topic types, traditional academic papers remain the dominant form in current translation program theses. Such papers generally follow the basic paradigm of “theoretical framework + text analysis,” where students select a particular translation theory to conduct confirmatory analysis of language conversion phenomena in a given text. Although translation practice reports account for a certain proportion, they remain relatively marginal in the overall topic landscape. More application-oriented types, such as internship reports and survey reports, constitute a low proportion and have yet to form a diversified pattern comparable to academic papers.

With regard to the sources of thesis topics, there are mainly two types: those given by the teacher and those proposed by the students. The topics given by the teacher are usually connected with the course work or the research field chosen by the teacher. Even though this is guaranteed to be academic and feasible, the topics given by the teacher may not always connect with the requirements of the industry at its most advanced state. Topics proposed by students show that their autonomy is being respected. But what happens in reality is that a significant number of the topics proposed by the students still need major adjustments by the teacher. Students' lack of skill in topic identification, the understanding of the industry, and academic writing are reflected here. However, topics obtained through the cooperation of the school and enterprises, corporate translation jobs, and industrial survey take up an extremely small proportion of the total topics. The fact implies that the channel of input of the topics in the industry system to the education system has actually been shut off.

As for the alignment level between chosen topics and industry requirements, there is a huge gap between existing choices of thesis topics in translation courses and industry needs. As it appears, most thesis topics revolve around analysis of classical literary materials, movie

subtitles and tourism-related materials; all of these corpora consist of materials that can be easily found in open literature. All in all, these topics have little relation to real-life tasks faced by translation agencies. Even in those cases where topics include applied texts, like business, law or medicine-related documents, the approach is still quite superficial and focuses mainly on language conversion methods without dealing with industry-related issues, such as workflow organization, quality assurance, terminology system creation, or post-editing optimization. Moreover, there is virtually no coverage of innovative fields within the language service industry, such as localization engineering, machine translation post-editing, language asset management and translation project management. It makes the testing of comprehensive application of professional knowledge practically impossible and thus negatively impacts quality of students' preparation.

3. Requirements and Principles for Translation Thesis Topic Selection Driven by Industry-Education Collaboration

3.1. Requirements for Topic Selection

Enterprises should actively participate in the development of application-oriented program clusters in universities, leverage their advantages in integrating supply chain resources, promptly embed industry employment standards into talent training curricula, assist universities in promptly adjusting talent training objectives, optimizing curriculum system design, and specifying professional skill standards, thereby helping universities refine their disciplinary characteristics (Xiao Ronghui, 2023: 143).

As a collaborative organizational mode between the educational system and the industrial system, industry-education integration sets forth three kinds of transformations that have to be fulfilled by topic selection in translation programs.

A transformation in topic selection towards real-world problem-solving is supposed, so that the applied nature of the chosen topics can be improved accordingly. As conventional topics focus on the reproduction model of "theory+case study," students are expected to conduct analysis of a given text based on a theory, which is actually the confirmatory application of prior knowledge. However, under the requirement of industry-education integration, topic selection needs to shift from a traditional model towards a "problem-oriented" one, which means that topics need to come out of real-world situations of the industrial context and are geared toward solving specific problems in translation practice.

Instead, the focus should be moved from the aim for linguistic equivalence to the aim of promoting knowledge integration, in order to bring into focus the interdisciplinary character of thesis topic choices. Translation is not merely linguistic transformation, but an interdisciplinarity process, performed in certain industrial context. With respect to the concept of industry education integration, the focus should no longer remain on just one aspect, namely "linguistic equivalence," since topic choices have to involve the integration of knowledge domains. Knowledge domains would include, for example, statutory interpretation logic in legal translations, terminological system creation in medical translation, and workflow management in localization engineering.

A shift from isolated components to systematic coherence should be achieved, with emphasis placed on the procedural nature of topic selection. Industry-education combination lays stress on the link between the "training practice employment" chain. Topic selection must not be seen as an isolated academic practice, but must be made a link organically with internships, industry courses at universities, and entrepreneurship projects. The goal state should be "assignment for output, learning for production," where the process of topic selection will become naturally linked with the practical work of translation students undertake.

3.2. Principles for Topic Selection

The design of topics should follow the competency-based approach and be closely related to the competency model of the translation profession. Specifically, it refers to comprehensive skills like bilingual conversion, translation technology operation, project management, terminology management, and cross-cultural communication. The ultimate value of a topic is not in the theoretical novelty but rather in its capacity to assess and help students develop these key competencies through the integrated practice and improvement.

Topics should stem from real tasks. They could be based on real translation projects in corporations, typical procedures in language service businesses, or concrete research needs in the industry. The talent demands of world-leading language service enterprises are shifting towards a “dumbbell-shaped” structure: the demand for generalist translators is being severely compressed, while the market demand for high-end compound talents and basic human-machine collaboration positions is strong (Wang Chuanying & Sun Jin, 2026: 67). In other words, topics are required to have realistic task context, constraint condition, and deliverable criteria. Not only the sourcing of topics is discussed here, but also the definition of the problem is concerned since students should be able to solve real industry problems that are open-ended and complex.

The topic choice procedure must promote multi-stakeholder involvement, by creating a three-party collaboration structure where university professors, industry practitioners, and students work together. In such a situation, the university professor would take care of the guidance in terms of academic principles and methodology, while the industrial supervisor will take care of setting up a realistic task scenario as well as professional criteria. Through combined guidance from both sets of supervisors, the topic chosen by the students will be both academically sound and practically relevant.

4. Pathway Design for Thesis Topic Selection in Translation Programs Driven by Industry-Education Collaboration

4.1. Institutional and Mechanism Level

Revisions should be made to the thesis management regulations to incorporate the topic module of industry-education integration. The current management regulations mostly regard the thesis as an element under “academic training,” where there is little regulation about industry-education integration topics. What needs to be done at this time is to revise the regulations in such a way that industry-education integration topics become an independent module, which will be given a minimum proportion (e.g., no less than 30%), and the credit recognition and other detailed rules need to be formulated. At the same time, the extent of industrial involvement can be considered an index of the quality of the program construction.

A system of dual-supervisor (from universities and industries) topic reviewing and supervision should be constructed. In terms of topic review, on-campus supervisors together with industrial specialists will organize a group of people to conduct the topic review on the basis of academic and industry-related standards. As for topic guidance, a dual supervisor mechanism needs to be put into effect, where on-campus supervisors are responsible for research methodology and academic writing, while industry supervisors take care of task context, data support, and other professional issues.

Guidelines for topics should be set, and a bank of cases should be developed according to industry norms. Taking industry norms of the language service industry as a reference, a set of guidelines for Industry-Education Integration Thesis Topics should be established, which would state clearly the direction of topics, kinds of tasks, forms of work, and criteria for assessment. At the same time, a bank of topics should be created, which contains exemplary

topic cases of industry-education integration that have been proven by practice. This bank should be updated every year with at least ten cases based on real business cases.

4.2. Innovation in Topic Sources and Types

4.2.1. Topics from Real Enterprise Translation Projects

Students can be assigned sub-projects which can be selected among actual translation work done in cooperation with companies, such as product manual translation, website localization, or subtitling dubbing. Students join the project teams and their theses study typical problems associated with the projects. In order to address these topics, it is necessary for the companies to provide real tasks and requirements and for the university to give advice about academic norms, thus reaching the unity of "learning by doing" and "learning by writing."

4.2.2. Topics on the Operation and Management of Language Service Enterprises

Topics on operation and management of language service enterprises involve the operation of translation companies such as project management, vendor management, and quality management, e.g., "Studies on Criteria of Translators' Selection in Small and Medium-sized Language Service Enterprises" or "Identification and Management of Risks of Translation Project Schedules." Through such topics, students' "translation competence" would be developed in terms of an industrial perspective.

4.2.3. Topics on Translation Technology and Localization Engineering

These topic areas relate to high-tech areas of specialization including the use of computer-assisted translation systems, post-editing techniques for machine translation, and localization process design. Sample research topics include "Comparative Analysis of Post-editing Efficiency of Texts from Different Disciplines" or "Quality Assurance Systems for Termbase Development and Maintenance." They are meant to address the issue of technological changes in the field and to develop technological competence among students.

4.2.4. Topics on Translation Quality Assessment and Process Optimization

These topics focus on quality assurance aspects within the translation production workflow, such as "Common Error Types and Intervention Strategies in the Translation Proofreading Stage." Such topics emphasize problem diagnosis and the implementability of improvement recommendations, with deliverables directly serving corporate quality system development.

4.2.5. Topics on Industry Surveys and Language Service Demand Analysis

These topics require conducting research surveys regarding the needs for language services in certain regions, industries, or cases, such as "Needs Analysis Survey for Cross-border E-commerce Platforms' Language Services" or "Analysis of Needs for Translating Equipment Manufacturing Enterprises to Enter Overseas Markets." In this way, the students will be able to develop their ability to perform an analysis of language services needs, design questionnaires, interpret results, and offer suggestions for language services planning.

4.3. Process Management Reform

The university should establish a preparatory stage of topic incubation. Topic selection procedure should start in the sixth semester, and topic incubation of students should be done by means of professional internships, cooperation between enterprises and university within joint courses, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship programs. It is expected that requirements would include the following: students have to formulate questions that may become topics of their thesis projects, make a topic memorandum and defend their topics and project proposals at the beginning of the seventh semester, jointly evaluated by the university and enterprise mentors. Preparatory incubation is designed to solve such problems as hasty topic selection and separation from internship.

The university should adopt a dynamic topic adjustment procedure. Students should be allowed to make topic adjustment in the course of research in case some changes occurred in enterprise tasks or in terms of data gathering, provided that the adjustment goes through evaluation process conducted jointly by both supervisors. Dynamic adjustment procedure takes into account the unpredictable nature of translation practice as well as guarantees academic credibility through standardization procedure.

A loop should be created from topics through which students would be able to connect topics with employability and career development opportunities. The university needs to integrate the results of topics in students' job hunting recommendations, for instance, transforming outstanding topic proposals into job application packages. On the other hand, there should be tracking of how graduates' chosen topics correlate with their first occupations. The feedback that the university is receiving can help optimize the topic selection guide and case database continuously.

4.4. Support for Teacher and Student Competence

4.4.1. Pathways for Enhancing Teachers' Industry Practice Competence

Tiered support program should be introduced to overcome a shortcoming associated with a lack of work experience at the language service enterprises among academic supervisors. Newly recruited faculty members need to fulfill the condition of completing at least three months of cumulative internship at the language service enterprise. Faculty members of key position need to engage in at least one industry collaboration every two years. Industry Mentor Workshops should be regularly arranged where specialists from the enterprises train the faculty staff in translation technology and other related skills. Results of industry engagement should be used in evaluating academic performance and professional titles of faculty, thus establishing an institution-wide incentive scheme.

4.4.2. Development of a Student Topic Selection Guidance Curriculum

As a continuation of academic writing curriculum, a new component, topic selection guidance, should be incorporated. It will cover such issues as topic identification techniques; principles of industry-based research and needs analysis; basic knowledge of operation of translation technology software; and requirements for writing project proposals and topic reports. Teaching should follow the principle of "micro-lectures together with workshops" and be provided by both academic and industrial supervisors. This guarantees students' ability to identify topics in view of proper methodological preparation and industry understanding.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

5.1. Research Conclusions

From the perspective of industry-education integration, this study has systematically explored the logical foundation and implementation pathways for reforming graduation thesis topic selection for translation major, and it has mainly reached the following conclusions.

Firstly, industry-education integration can be used as a theoretical perspective in addressing the issues related to the reform of graduation thesis topic selection for translation majors. The findings in this study indicate that the current topic selection mode has been hindered by the structural contradiction between overemphasis on academic concerns and underdeveloped industrial alignment in selecting topics, and the reason behind such an issue stems from the ignorance of including "terminal stage" in the analysis of industry-education integration. In other words, the principles of supply and demand alignment, resource transformation, and value sharing advocated by the industry-education integration perspective just provide an appropriate framework for handling such contradictions. Through introducing the concept of industry-education integration in the stage of choosing graduation thesis topics, we can

successfully achieve the triple transformation in topic selection, namely, a transformation from “knowledge reproduction” to “resolving practical problems,” a transformation from “monolingual conversion” to “translation competence and industry knowledge cross-border integration,” and a transformation from “end-stage evaluation in isolation” to “perfect connection between internships and course projects.”

Second, the reform of graduation thesis topic selection for translation majors requires systematic advancement across four levels: institutional mechanisms, topic sources, process management, and competency development. At the institutional level, universities should revise the graduation thesis management regulations, add an industry-education integrated topic module, establish a university-enterprise dual-supervisor system for topic selection review and guidance, and develop a topic selection guide and case repository based on industry standards. In terms of the source level, universities can add more types of sources that include not only academic papers but also practical projects on enterprise translation, operation management of language services, translation technology and localization engineering, translation quality evaluation and optimization of translation process, and surveys and market analysis of language services. In this way, a single source pattern centered on academic papers will be broken. In terms of the process level, universities should consider adding a preparatory stage for selecting topics, and postpone the topic selection process to the sixth semester while linking it with internship programs and coursework projects. Moreover, an adaptive topic adjustment approach that takes the uncertainties of translation practices into consideration is expected. Besides, the connection between topic choice and career prospects should be strengthened by adding a feedback process of connecting topics and employment, thus forming a closed system. In terms of the competency level, universities can strengthen the hierarchical ways to improve the industry practice competence of the teachers as well as the curriculum of guiding students to choose topics.

5.2. Future Research Directions

Based on the above limitations, future research can be deepened along the following two directions.

The first direction is the establishment of an evaluation system for topics related to industry education integration. Though the existing evaluation standards for the thesis of translation students have already been unified along five aspects—topic choice, relevance, innovation, professionalism, and standardization—special evaluation indicators for industry education integration topics remain undefined yet. Future studies need to find ways to combine scientific nature with practicability, determine the weight ratio and scoring rules of each indicator, and analyze the mechanisms for joint evaluation performed by university and enterprise tutors.

The other area of future research is comparative studies of reform approaches to differentiation among different types of institutions. There are notable differences among applied undergraduate universities and research universities, both in terms of their position, faculty makeup, and their enterprise cooperation abilities, and therefore, there are distinct needs and requirements when it comes to reforming topic selection and implementing them. Future research can conduct comparative multi-case studies to determine crucial factors that influence reform results and derive successful pathway models depending on the type of institution. Specifically, institutions oriented toward industry can focus on enterprise project topics, while normal universities can look into translation teaching cases, and comprehensive universities can rely on their diversity to develop localization engineering topics.

Funding Projects

[1] Heilongjiang Province Higher Education Institution Undergraduate Graduation Thesis Reform Research Project “Reform and Practice in Undergraduate Thesis Topic Selection for Translation Major(SJGZB2024289)”

[2] Mudanjiang Normal University’s Pilot Program on Educational Reform through Project-Based Learning: “Innovation and Practice in Cultivating Interdisciplinary Talents for International Communication”

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