

Divided Training, Fractured Competence: Competence Gaps in Undergraduate Translation Education

ABSTRACT. This article examines a structural question at the heart of undergraduate translation education: the institutional separation between foreign language instruction and translator training, referred to here as the Separated Training Model (STM). Drawing on empirical data from a questionnaire survey administered to 29 students at ISIT (France), Nanjing University (China), the University of Geneva (Switzerland) and the University of Zurich (Switzerland), this study applies the PACTE (2003) framework for translation competence (Chinese-French-English) and Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies to investigate how this structural division generates multi-layered competence gaps. The analysis reveals that, while students demonstrate confidence in surface-level linguistic skills and tool usage, significant gaps persist at the discourse, cultural mediation, strategic, and metacognitive levels. The article argues that these gaps are not individual deficiencies but systemic consequences of a bifurcated pedagogical design, and proposes a four-dimensional pedagogical model (Zhang, 2026) as a reintegrative framework for undergraduate translation programs.

Keywords: Separated Training Model, Competence Gap, Translation Competence (Chinese-French-English), Language Learning Strategies, Undergraduate Translation Education

1. Introduction: A Structural Problem Hidden in Plain Sight

Students enrolled in undergraduate translation programs face a paradox that often goes unacknowledged by institutional design: the skills taught in their foreign language courses do not automatically transfer into translation competence, as translation competence constitutes an independent decision-making mechanism rather than a mere extension of linguistic ability (Pym 2003). In many Chinese and international translation programmes, the curriculum tends to be divided into two largely autonomous tracks, i.e., language instruction, aimed at building communicative proficiency, and translation training, aimed at developing professional skills for interlingual mediation. This division is clearly observable in the undergraduate curriculum of Hunan Normal University (2024), where the language track comprises extensive English skill courses (e.g., Comprehensive English, English Listening & Speaking, English

Reading, and English Public Speaking) alongside Chinese language modules (Modern Chinese, Ancient Chinese, and Advanced Chinese Writing) to solidify bilingual foundations, while the translation track systematically offers core courses such as English-Chinese/Chinese-English Translation, Consecutive Interpreting, Translation Technology, Computer-Aided Translation, and translation workshops, supplemented by theoretical subjects like Introduction to Translation Studies. These course configurations directly address both linguistic competence and professional mediation capabilities, confirming the dual-structure model while also reflecting local adaptations through balanced bilingual emphasis and cultural content. Besides, such curricular architecture, particularly as instantiated through the grammar-translation method, has demonstrated measurable gains in learner efficiency. The effectiveness of this pedagogical model is further evidenced by the fact that Hunan Normal University's non-English major students have consistently outperformed the average of key national universities in the National College English Test (CET-4) in terms of first-time pass rate, excellence rate, and mean scores, maintaining a leading position among both provincial institutions and national normal universities (Hunan Normal University 2021). Prior research has established that the working language proficiency of translation students may be regarded as one of the significant determining factors in whether translation competence can be successfully cultivated (e.g., Colina 2015; Malmkjær 1998). Nevertheless, while foreign language proficiency constitutes a necessary precondition for translation competence, it is now widely recognized that such a condition remains, in itself, insufficient (Gile 2005). In pedagogical practice, the relationship between the two remains, in Carreres' (2014) terms, a persistent "divide" that continues to be reassessed rather than resolved.

With respect to proposed solutions to this issue, Wu *et al.* (2019: 233) find that trainers who have attempted to integrate foreign language learning into the cultivation of translation competence have «primarily focused on developing trainees' bilingual and translation knowledge sub-competencies and marginalized other sub-competencies in their training practices.» Furthermore, Zlatnar Moe *et al.* (2015) demonstrate that linguistic competence alone is insufficient to sustain translation performance, and that dedicated translation training remains indispensable. This pedagogical gap may stem from several interrelated factors: trainers' limited awareness of the intrinsic links between foreign language instruction and translation competence development (Carreres & Noriega-Sánchez 2011); persistent difficulties in translating these bridging factors into concrete teaching practice (Alves 2005); or a failure to accurately identify and align the relevant variables in the integration process. Any of these con-

ditions, alone or in combination, may give rise to the competence transfer difficulties commonly observed in translation pedagogy.

This article identifies this institutional arrangement as the Separated Training Model (STM) and argues that it generates a set of predictable, multi-layered competence gaps. The STM is not merely a curricular inefficiency; it also reflects a deeper epistemological assumption that language competence and translation competence are linearly related, and that the latter can only begin once the former has reached an adequate threshold. In fact, Cummins (1976) proposes that learners must attain a minimum threshold level of linguistic competence; otherwise, the development of higher-order cognitive and academic abilities may be constrained.

Nevertheless, within the PACTE model, bilingual sub-competence and extralinguistic sub-competence are not considered translation-specific, insofar as they are equally operative among all bilinguals. Of particular significance, however, is the observation that the core of translation competence resides in strategic sub-competence, that is, the procedural knowledge responsible for ensuring the efficiency of the translation process and for resolving translation problems as they arise (PACTE, 2003: 60). This theoretical framing reveals a meaningful degree of convergence between foreign language instruction and translation competence development at the level of competence cultivation, thereby lending conceptual support to the possibility of more principled integration between the two domains.

The empirical basis of this article (Chinese-French) is a structured questionnaire survey conducted as part of the author's doctoral research at INALCO, administered to 29 students at three internationally recognized translation programs. The questionnaire assessed both language learning strategy usage (following Oxford 1990) and self-evaluated translation sub-competence (following PACTE 2003 and EMT 2022), enabling a cross-analysis of the two domains that the STM keeps apart.

This study situates itself at the intersection of two broader theoretical concerns, namely interdisciplinary theory transfer, understood as the deliberate import of frameworks from one discipline into another to illuminate phenomena that native frameworks cannot fully explain, and the paradigm shift currently underway in translation pedagogy, from a language-first, sequential model to an integrated, competence-centered model.

2. *The Separated Training Model: A Theoretical Framework*

2.1 Defining the Separated Training Model

The Separated Training Model (STM) refers to an institutional and curricular arrangement in which foreign language instruction and translation training are conceived, organized, and delivered as distinct, largely autonomous domains within academic program. The separation is visible at multiple levels, such as course design, teacher practice, and student cognition.

At a deeper level, the STM reflects a philosophical stance about the nature of translation competence: it is a high-level, advanced skill that presupposes an autonomous, prior mastery of at least two languages involved. This stance has pedagogical consequences. It tends to delay the integration of translational awareness into language learning; it deprives translation courses of the language scaffolding students may still need; and it prevents students from using real translation tasks, which research shows to be effective drivers of deeper language acquisition (Cook 2010; González-Davies 2004, 2014; Leonardi 2010).

One challenge to the assumptions underlying the STM comes from the PACTE group's (2003) holistic model of translation competence. PACTE conceptualizes translation competence as an autonomous, complex, and procedural expert knowledge system, comprising five interrelated sub-competences (PACTE, 2003: 60). Crucially, the strategic sub-competence occupies a central position, governing the application and coordination of the others (*ibidem*). The implication is clear that translation competence cannot be reduced to linguistic competences. It is an independent cognitive and professional capacity that requires explicit, dedicated development.

This conceptualization contradicts the linear logic of the STM. If translation competence is autonomous, then deferring its cultivation until language competence reaches a certain threshold means losing years of potential development. Furthermore, as Anderson's (1983) ACT theory suggests, skill transfer between domains requires the existence of common cognitive procedures. When language courses and translation courses are designed without shared procedural objectives, students cannot spontaneously bridge the gap, and the competence gap may become structurally fixed, which can be detected during translation training. In addition, Kiraly (2013) contends that, in contrast to transmissionist conceptions of learning, a social constructivist approach reconceptualizes learning as an active process in which the learner should be personally and meaningfully engaged. Authentic translation tasks, as compared to the mechanical, sentence-level exercise formats characteristic of the grammar-translation method, expose students to real communicative contexts

and afford them greater latitude in the acquisition of background knowledge and in the exercise of translational flexibility (Károly 2013). As Cook (2010) and Schäffner (1998) have argued, such tasks expand learners' target-language vocabulary, refine their stylistic sensitivity and verbal agility, and consolidate structural knowledge for active use, conditions that are conducive to the multidimensional enhancement of students' linguistic competence.

2.2 Interdisciplinary Theory Transfer as a Research Lens

This study adopts the perspective of interdisciplinary theory transfer, i.e., the practice of importing theoretical frameworks from one academic discipline into another to generate new explanatory power. In the context of this research, this transfer operates in two directions: translation studies frameworks (e.g., PACTE 2003; EMT 2022) are introduced into foreign language pedagogy, while language learning frameworks (e.g., Oxford 1990) provide structured classifications of learning strategies. This bidirectional transfer is analytically productive because the STM creates an institutional wall between these domains. By dissolving this wall at the theoretical level, the research reveals connections that the separated curricula actively obscure. The competence gaps identified in this study are not merely observable through a translation studies lens or a language acquisition one taken alone; rather, they emerge from the interaction between the two.

It is important to distinguish this theoretical move from a paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense (Kuhn 2012). STM currently constitutes the dominant paradigm in translation pedagogy, structured around shared assumptions and institutional arrangements. This article claims that emerging evidence, including the data presented below, points to the possibility of a paradigmatic reorientation toward integrated, competence-centered models. Theory transfer provides the methodological pathway for exploring this potential reorientation.

3. *Research Design and Methodology*

3.1 Research Objectives and Questions

The questionnaire survey analyzed in this article was designed to address three research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What language learning strategies do translation students use, and how frequently?

RQ2: How do translation students self-evaluate their translation sub-competences?

RQ3: Is there a discernible correlation between language learning strategy usage and translation competence development, and if so, what does it reveal about the effects of the STM?

3.2 Instrument Design

The questionnaire combined quantitative and qualitative data collection modalities. Its core used two types of Likert scales: a frequency scale (from “Never” to “Very frequently”) for language learning strategy items, and a competence level scale (from “Novice” to “Expert”) for translation sub-competence items. Open-ended questions at the end invited respondents to reflect on the perceived relationship between their language learning practices and their translation development, but for this study we only analyze quantitative section.

The instrument was theoretically grounded in three frameworks: Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, which distinguishes memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective strategy clusters; the PACTE (2003) model of translation competence, with particular attention to its bilingual, extralinguistic, instrumental, strategic, and psycho-physiological sub-competences; and the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) competence framework (2022). Detailed conceptual explanations were provided at the beginning of each module to ensure that respondents could respond on the basis of a shared understanding. The final Cronbach’s alpha for the questionnaire was 0.704 (standardized: 0.715), indicating acceptable internal consistency for an exploratory survey of this scope.

3.3 Sample

A total of 29 valid responses were collected from students at three translation programs: ISIT, Nanjing University, the University of Geneva and the University of Zurich. The sample was composed mainly of advanced undergraduates and master’s students, respondents who had already spent significant time within the STM framework and could therefore provide meaningful retrospective assessments of its effects. The primary working languages of most respondents are Chinese, English, and French.

While the sample size is relatively modest, the careful selection of high-performing institutions was intended to capture students with strong baseline language competences and high academic motivation, the very population for whom the competence gaps suggested by our theoretical analysis might be most observable. If the STM appears to produce competence gaps even among such students in elite programs, this would provide further support for the

structural argument, though we acknowledge the need for caution in generalizing beyond this sample. This purposive selection of high-performing students aligns with well-established purposive sampling principles in qualitative research (Patton 2015).

4. Findings: Mapping the Competence Gaps

4.1 Asymmetric Competence Development: Technical Proficiency and Metacognitive Deficits Among Translation Learners

One finding to emerge from the cross-analysis of language strategy data and translation competence self-evaluations is that students demonstrate strong confidence in surface-level, domain-specific skills. They exhibit greater variance and lower confidence in integrative, metacognitive, and culturally-oriented capacities.

Competency	% Expert	% Expert + Advanced	Distribution
Use of dictionaries / reference resources	27.6%	89.6%	Highly concentrated (high level)
Source language competence	51.7%	89.7%	Highly concentrated (high level)
Translation software	10.3%	65.5%	Moderately concentrated
Cultural understanding	20.7%	75.9%	Moderately dispersed
Problem-solving	13.8%	58.6%	Dispersed
Specialized knowledge	6.9%	44.8%	Highly dispersed (mostly intermediate)

Table 1: Asymmetric Development of Translation Sub-Competencies: Concentration in Instrumental Skills vs. Dispersion in Metacognitive and Cultural Capacities

Table 1 shows that the surveyed students demonstrate proficiency in using language and tools (Technical Proficiency). However, when it comes to understanding culture, solving unfamiliar problems, or acquiring in-depth knowledge (Metacognitive & Cultural Capacities), their competence not only declines overall, but the gap between individuals also widens. For example, problem-solving and specialized knowledge constitute a bottleneck in competency acquisition. The data (Expert + Advanced = 58.6% and 44.8%) show a “dispersed” pattern, signifying that student performance begins to diverge significantly at this stage: a few at the advance stage, but most remain stuck at the intermediate level.

This phenomenon does not appear to be incidental. Rather, it may reflect an educational system that rewards visible, measurable performance in one

domain at a time. While language courses have traditionally emphasized accurate linguistic production (e.g. Ma 2013),, and translation courses often prioritize technical proficiency with tools and procedures (e.g. Li 2009), the findings of this study suggest that neither approach systematically cultivates the metacognitive awareness, cultural mediation capacity, or strategic flexibility that professional translation requires.

4.2 Language Learning Strategy Usage: Patterns and Implications

4.2.1 Behavioral Strategies: High Frequency, Narrow Orientation

The most frequently used language learning strategies were behavioral, regular practice of the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), with 79.3% of respondents reporting practice at least once per week. Undergraduate students showed the highest frequency (62.5% practicing daily or near-daily), while master's students showed a notable decline (only 36.4% daily frequency). This inverse relationship between educational level and basic language practice frequency is diagnostically significant. It implies that as students advance, language practice is progressively displaced by domain-specific translation training, precisely the moment when deeper linguistic integration with translation tasks would be most productive.

4.2.2 Memory Strategies: Declining Use at Advanced Levels

Memory strategies were used frequently or very frequently by 75% of undergraduate students but only 36.4% of master's students. This decline is interpretable in two ways. On one reading, it reflects appropriate progression: advanced students have internalized enough vocabulary to rely less on explicit memorization (Anderson 1982, 1985). Alternatively, this pattern could reflect an implicit curricular message embedded within the Separated Teaching Model, that language development is a prerequisite to, rather than a concurrent component of, translation training. If this interpretation holds, the decline may signal a premature foreclosure of language development, occurring just when translation tasks could otherwise drive deeper lexical acquisition. However, further research would be needed to establish whether students indeed perceive such a message, and whether continued memory strategy use would in fact yield superior translation outcomes.

4.2.3 Metacognitive Strategies: High Variance, Critical Significance

The distribution of metacognitive strategy usage, such as goal-setting, learning monitoring and outcome evaluation, showed the highest variance

of any strategy category, with responses spread relatively evenly across all frequency options. The item “Evaluating learning outcomes after completing tasks” showed the highest item-total correlation in the entire questionnaire (0.666), indicating that it is the single strongest predictor of overall score on the survey’s composite construct. This finding has important implications, as metacognitive strategy use is the most variable behavior in the sample and the most structurally central to the competence framework being measured (Zheng 2025).

The STM offers a plausible explanation for this variance. In a separated curriculum, students receive no systematic training in applying metacognitive strategies across the language-translation boundary. A student may be an effective self-regulating language learner, able to monitor their own linguistic progress, without having ever been asked to apply similar self-regulatory skills to the different, more complex cognitive demands of translation. This is consistent with PACTE’s model, in which bilingual sub-competence is not translation-specific, since it is shared with bilinguals and language teachers, whereas the strategic sub-competence that regulates translation is (PACTE 2003; Lörcher 1991). The strategies do not transfer automatically, as metacognitive skill transfer across domains rarely occurs spontaneously and typically requires deliberate training (Stebner *et al.* 2022).

4.3 Translation Competence Self-Evaluations: The Anatomy of the Gap

4.3.1 Bilingual Sub-competence: Confidence Asymmetry

Respondents rated their source language proficiency more highly (51.7% at Expert level) than their target language proficiency (41.4% at Expert level). While source-language dominance is expected given that participants’ native languages such as French, Chinese and German, the gap is analytically interesting because it suggests that even students in elite programs feel less secure in their productive target-language competence. This finding aligns with a STM environment in which language courses primarily develop receptive competence in the foreign language, while translation courses assume a productive command that the language curriculum has not fully established, consistent with SLA research showing that productive competence does not automatically follow from receptive competence (Schmidt 1990), and with the EMT Competence Framework’s positioning of high-level language competence as an admission prerequisite rather than a curricular training target (European Commission 2022).

4.3.2 Extralinguistic Sub-competence: The Cultural Competence Gap

While 22.4% of respondents rated their cultural contextual understanding at Expert level, significantly fewer (20.7%) rated themselves as Experts, and the majority (55.2%) placed themselves at the Advanced level. More revealingly, domain-specific subject knowledge, the other major dimension of extralinguistic competence, showed lower confidence than cultural understanding, with a majority placing themselves at the Intermediate level.

These findings point to one competence gap produced by the STM, specifically the gap between knowing about culture (knowledge that the language curriculum provides through civilization courses, cultural content in textbooks, etc.) and being able to mediate between cultures in a translational context. Cultural knowledge as information is not the same as cultural competence as practice. The STM, by keeping language and translation separate, rarely creates the contexts in which cultural information is transformed into mediating action. This distinction mirrors Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, which separates declarative cultural knowledge (*savoirs*) from the skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir-faire*) required to mediate between cultures. The STM, by keeping language and translation separate, provides ample opportunities for the former but starves the latter.

4.3.3 Instrumental Sub-competence: The Tool-Use Paradox

One contrast in the data involves instrumental competence. The proportion of respondents rating themselves at high proficiency in tool usage (dictionaries, glossaries, reference resources: 62.1% at Advanced or Expert; translation software including CAT¹ tools and neural MT²: comparable high levels) was significantly higher than the proportion rating themselves highly on problem-solving capacity (44.8%) or strategic adaptability (varying levels, with a majority at Intermediate).

This tool-use paradox is interpretable as a specific product of contemporary STM environments. Translation courses in elite programs now invest heavily in technology training, and this investment is reflected in student self-confidence. However, the ability to use tools efficiently does not automatically generate the capacity to identify problems that tools cannot solve, or to adapt strategies when familiar tools are inadequate. The gap between tool-use confidence and problem-solving capacity suggests a form of instrumental dependency, a technologically-mediated version of the surface-depth gap identified at the strategy level. In addition, it points to a risk of "instrumental dependency", where technological fluency masks underlying gaps in analytical and strategic

¹ CAT = Computer-assisted Translation. ² MT = Machine Translation.

thinking. This suggests that technology training, while effective in building confidence, may inadvertently create a new form of competence bottleneck if not integrated with problem-solving pedagogy.

4.3.4 Strategic and Psycho-physiological Sub-competences: Distributed Uncertainty

The data on strategic sub-competence (i.e., the ability to identify and solve translation problems; the ability to adapt strategies to text type, purpose, and audience) shows significant dispersion, with a majority at intermediate levels and substantial representation at both novice and advanced levels. Similarly, psycho-physiological competence items, such as attention management, stress management, switching between languages without accuracy loss, demonstrate even distributions across levels, suggesting that these capacities are experienced as highly variable and individually determined.

From an STM perspective, this dispersion is structurally predictable. Strategic and psycho-physiological competences are cross-domain capacities that, according to the PACTE (2003) model, cannot be built within either language training or translation training alone; they require systematic, explicit integration across both. If such integration is not deliberately built into a programme's design, these competences are more likely to be left to individual variation. Some students may develop them through personal initiative, while others may not encounter systematic opportunities to do so. This would be consistent with the dispersion observed in the present data, though confirming this mechanism would require further inquiry into actual curricular design and instructional practice. This calls to mind the imperative to «initiate a dialogue between translation studies and foreign language teaching» and to align language teaching «with the specific training needs of students in translation and interpreting programs» (Cerezo Herrero 2025).

Competence Dimension	STM-Predicted Gap	Empirical Evidence	Gap Severity
Bilingual (source-target asymmetry)	Target productive competence underdeveloped	51.7% Expert in SL ³ vs. 41.4% in TL ⁴	Moderate
Extralinguistic (cultural mediation)	Cultural knowledge ≠ cultural practice	20.7% Expert; majority at Advanced	Significant
Instrumental (tool dependency)	Tool use without problem-solving depth	62.1% Advanced/Expert in tools vs. 44.8% in problem-solving	High
Strategic (adaptability)	No cross-domain strategy transfer	Majority at Intermediate; high variance	High
Metacognitive (self-regulation)	Language metacognition not extended to translation	High variance; highest item-total correlation	Critical

Table 2. Competence Gaps by Dimension: STM Predictions vs. Empirical Data

³ SL = Source Language.

⁴ TL = Target Language.

5. Discussion: Structural Gaps in STM Language Education

5.1 The Cognitive Mechanism of the Gap

The competence gaps documented above are not random deficiencies. They follow a coherent pattern that can be explained by the cognitive logic of the STM. When language instruction and translation training are separated, students build two relatively autonomous knowledge structures. One is organized around the goal of accurate, fluent production in the target language, and the other is organized around the goal of functionally equivalent rendering of a source text. These structures have different procedural profiles, self-regulatory demands, and affective contexts.

The problem is not that these two structures exist. In fact, professional translators obviously need both. Nonetheless, in a separated curriculum, the two remain disconnected in a systematic way, a divide long noted in the literature on the institutional and theoretical separation between second language acquisition, language teaching, and translation studies (Colina 2002). The bridges that would allow strategic, metacognitive, and cultural knowledge to flow from one structure to the other are simply not built. From an ACT theory perspective (Anderson 1983), the common cognitive procedures that would enable transfer are absent because the two domains have never been brought into contact in a shared task context.

The result is what this article terms a competence fracture, a structural break rather than a mere gap. This echoes the distinction, in conceptual change theory, between assimilation (new information added to existing structures) and accommodation (existing structures must be reorganized because they can no longer accommodate new phenomena) (Posner *et al.* 1982). A gap can be closed by additional learning and a disjunction requires reconstruction.

This matches PACTE's own model of translation competence acquisition, which holds that novices need not only to acquire missing sub-competences but also to restructure ones they already possess (PACTE 2000). Presas (2000) further shows that bilingual competence and translation competence are qualitatively distinct, not points on one continuum, so strong language competence does not by itself yield translation competence. Students who have spent years building language competence within the STM framework have not merely "not yet learned" to connect language and translation; they have learned to keep them separate. Reintegration requires actively undoing that learned separation.

5.2 The Affective Dimension: Competence Anxiety and Identity Confusion

The questionnaire data also points to an affective dimension of the competence discontinuity. Items related to psycho-physiological sub-competences, particularly stress management and language-switching under translation pressure, showed high variance and generally lower self-ratings. This is consistent with qualitative reports from similar student populations: students who perform well in language courses often experience significant anxiety when they enter translation training, precisely because the skills they have developed do not map onto the new demands they face (Yan & Wang 2012; Zanirato 2008).

This anxiety is typically attributed by students, and sometimes by instructors, to insufficient language competence. The STM's implicit narrative, "if you struggle with translation, you need more language", reinforces this attribution. The data in this study suggests a different interpretation. However, the study of Yan *et al.* (2018) explicitly identifies that anxiety in translation learning stems not only from linguistic competence itself, but also from learners' self-perception of their own language ability. It indicates that the STM, rather than merely failing to build a bridge, may encourage students to misread a metacognitive challenge as a language deficit, thereby misdirecting their self-assessment.

6. *Toward an Integrated Model: The Four-Dimensional Framework*

Based on the theoretical analysis and empirical evidence presented above, this article endorses and extends the four-dimensional pedagogical model proposed in the author's doctoral dissertation (Zhang 2026), a model centered on language, discourse, culture, and translation as simultaneously active dimensions of every foreign language teaching event in a translation program.

In fact, the competence gaps documented in Section 4 and interpreted in Section 5 do not describe five isolated deficiencies to be remedied one at a time. They trace the outline of a single structural fracture between language and translation training, summarized in Table 2 as bilingual asymmetry, cultural mediation, instrumental dependency, strategic adaptability, and metacognitive integration. Building on this evidence, this article endorses and extends the four-dimensional pedagogical model proposed in the author's doctoral dissertation, a model centered on language, discourse, culture, and translation as simultaneously active dimensions of every foreign language teaching event in a translation program, rather than as a sequence of stages to be completed in turn.

The language dimension responds to the bilingual asymmetry documented in Section 4.3.1, where respondents rated their source-language proficiency more highly than their target-language proficiency (51.7% versus 41.4% at Expert level). This pattern is consistent with the EMT Competence Framework's positioning of language competence as an admission prerequisite rather than a trained curricular outcome (European Commission 2022). It also aligns with Presas' (2000) argument that translation competence is qualitatively distinct from bilingual competence, the latter being merely one sub-competence among several that constitute the former, rather than translation competence being reducible to an advanced point on a bilingual continuum. The language dimension therefore maintains its necessary focus on bilingual sub-competence, that is, accuracy, fluency, and range in both working languages. But it does so with explicit awareness of the translational demands that students will eventually face, ensuring that language learning objectives are not defined in isolation from translation goals.

The discourse dimension targets the gap between surface-level and integrative competence identified in Section 4.1, where students reported strong confidence in instrumental, sentence-level skills but markedly lower and more dispersed confidence in the integrative capacities reported in Table 1 (Expert plus Advanced falling to 58.6% for problem-solving, against near-ceiling ratings for tool use). Following Posner *et al.*'s (1982) distinction between assimilation and accommodation, this asymmetry suggests that sentence-level accuracy habits do not reorganize automatically into text-level judgment. A genuine restructuring of the learner's processing unit is required, not a further addition of vocabulary or grammar. The discourse dimension therefore extends the unit of pedagogical attention from the sentence to the text, addressing the gap between language-course training in sentence-level accuracy and translation-course requirements for textual coherence, information structure, and genre competence. Discourse analysis tasks such as parallel text comparison and genre analysis build the cognitive bridge between linguistic competence and translational competence.

The culture dimension addresses the most severe gap identified in the data, the cultural mediation gap documented in Section 4.3.2, where only 20.7% of respondents rated themselves at Expert level in cultural mediation despite comparatively higher self-ratings for declarative cultural knowledge. This asymmetry corresponds to Byram's (1997) distinction between *savoirs*, declarative cultural knowledge, and *savoir-faire*, the skills of discovery and interaction required to mediate between cultures. The culture dimension therefore replaces the informational model of cultural content (e.g., teaching facts

about the target culture) with a mediatory model, such as developing the capacity to navigate between cultural frames in a translational context, targeting the knowledge-to-mediation gap directly rather than adding further cultural information.

The translation dimension corresponds to the gap this study identifies as most critical, the metacognitive gap documented in Section 4.2.3, where the item “evaluating learning outcomes after completing tasks” showed the highest item-total correlation in the questionnaire (0.666), a sub-competence that PACTE (2003) treats as strategic and requiring deliberate training rather than presupposition. For this reason, the translation dimension does not wait until the final year of the program. It introduces translational awareness, often defined as the capacity to reflect on how meaning is constructed, framed, and transferred across linguistic and cultural boundaries, from the first year of language study. Introducing this awareness early, rather than deferring it to a capstone stage, is consistent with Meyer and Land’s (2003) account of threshold concepts. On this account, translation competence is not additional information layered onto existing language knowledge, but a troublesome, transformative reconceptualization of what it means to know a language, one that learners can only acquire by working through translation tasks as cognitive challenges that drive deeper language learning, rather than treating such tasks as tests that merely demonstrate language already learned.

Table 3 operationalizes this correspondence, aligning each dimension with the specific competence and gap it targets, as documented empirically in Table 2, and with a representative pedagogical activity capable of putting the alignment into classroom practice.

Dimension	Primary Competence Targeted	STM Gap Addressed	Key Pedagogical Activity
Language	Language sub-competence	Source-target asymmetry	Contrastive linguistic analysis
Discourse	Bilingual + Strategic	Sentence-to-text gap	Parallel text comparison
Culture	Extralinguistic (cultural)	Knowledge-to-mediation gap	Intercultural negotiation tasks
Translation	Strategic + Metacognitive	Metacognitive & strategic <u>intergration</u> gap	Reflective translation practice

Table 3. The Four-Dimensional Model and the Competence Gaps It Addresses

7. *Conclusions*

This article has argued that the Separated Training Model, the institutional division between foreign language instruction and translation training, is not a neutral organizational arrangement but a pedagogically consequential design choice that produces predictable, multi-layered competence gaps. Drawing on empirical data from a questionnaire survey of 29 students at elite translation programs, and applying a bidirectional framework drawing on PACTE's (2003) model of translation competence and Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies, the analysis has identified five domains of structured gap: bilingual competence asymmetry, cultural mediation deficit, instrumental dependency, strategic fragility, and metacognitive disorientation.

These gaps reflect systemic misalignments rather than individual shortcomings. They are the predictable outcomes of curricula that treat language and translation as separate endeavors, depriving students of the integrated pedagogical contexts in which the bridging knowledge required for professional translation competence can take root. The resulting competence fracture cannot be remediated simply by intensifying language instruction or increasing translation practice. Rather, it calls for a fundamental reconceptualization of what undergraduate translation education is for, and of how its constituent components must be made to speak to one another.

The four-dimensional pedagogical model proposed as a response to these gaps represents both a theoretical integration and a practical program. It does not eliminate the distinction

between language learning and translation training; instead, it reembeds that distinction within a unified pedagogical vision in which language, meaning, culture, and translation are not sequential stages but simultaneously active dimensions of every learning event.

Whether this represents a paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense (2012) remains to be seen. What the evidence suggests is that the anomalies have accumulated sufficiently to make the current paradigm's inadequacies visible, and that the theoretical resources for an alternative are now available. The task for translation pedagogy researchers and program designers is to translate that theoretical availability into institutional reality.

Several limitations of the present study should be noted. The sample size, while appropriate for exploratory research, constrains the statistical robustness of the correlation analyses, and the reliance on self-evaluation introduces potential bias, particularly given that students in the Separated Training Model may apply different self-assessment frameworks than those in integrated

programs. The questionnaire's interdisciplinary design, bridging language acquisition and translation studies, also produced some conceptual ambiguity for respondents, pointing to the need for more explicit contextual framing in future instruments. These limitations suggest clear directions for future work: larger-scale comparative studies contrasting STM and integrated program students, longitudinal tracking of competence development across the undergraduate trajectory, and mixed-methods designs incorporating in-depth interviews to capture the lived experience of the competence fracture.

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