

# AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CURRICULA FOR TRANSLATION PROGRAMS AT THE UNDERGRADUATE AND THE GRADUATE LEVELS IN IRAN: PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the curricula for translation programs (training translators) at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Iran. Observations and experiences indicated that Iranian senior translator trainees at the undergraduate and graduate levels were not competent enough to perform satisfactorily in real situations of translation/interpretation careers. To investigate the sources of this problem, a pilot study was conducted that demonstrated traces of deficiency in the university curricula rather than weaknesses in the trainers per se.*

*To investigate the deficiencies in the curricula, nine hypotheses were formed that questioned the curricula in different ways. The hypotheses were tested through triangulation (Mackey and Gass, 2005): data were collected via questionnaire, observation, interview and test of the translator trainees. The participants of the study included two groups of senior translator trainees at the undergraduate and the graduate levels, two groups of teachers for the undergraduate and the graduate levels and one group of translation experts. The data of the study were analyzed via SPSS using descriptive statistics. The results of the study indicated that there were more deficiencies in the curriculum for translator training programs in Iran at the undergraduate level than the curriculum at the graduate level. Finally, an optimized curricular model for training translators in Iran was presented.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language provides one of the most readily accessible windows into the nature of the human mind. How children acquire this complex system with such apparent ease continues to fascinate the student of human language (Hakuta, 1977). The last quarter of a century, in particular, has witnessed a qualitative leap in our knowledge of the language-acquisition process in young children. In recent years, researchers have begun extending their scope of inquiry into the problem of second-language acquisition (SLA). The motivation underlying this new endeavor is two-fold: first, it provides an added perspective on human language, and second, interest in second-language teaching and bilingual education has resulted in a greater need to understand the mechanisms underlying second-language acquisition. The focus of analysis has undergone distinct shifts in perspective as a function of our changing conceptualizations of what language is and also what the learner brings to the learning situation (Hakuta, 1977).

Research on SLA has been expanded enormously since its inception. Studies of SLA have increased in quantity as researchers have addressed a wider range of topics, asked new questions, and worked within multiple methodologies. At the same time, the field has become increasingly bidirectional and multi-faceted in its applications. As new theories and research have emerged on language and learning, their application to the study of SLA has been fruitful. It has led to long-needed explanations about developmental regularities and persistent difficulties, and has opened up new lines of research on the processes and sequences of second language (L2) development (Pica, 2005).

Discovering and applying newer findings from the study of SLA to educational concerns has been the focus of long-standing debates about the role of different variables in the SLA process, specifically, about the nature of the learner's input needs and requirements. That is, what the learners learn for, or the gap between the current and the desired proficiency level. A modest, but increasing, number of SLA research findings, have had direct application to instructional decisions. Most other SLA findings have served as a resource to inform teaching practice. One of the significant applications to and from the study of SLA, *translation*, is the focus of this investigation.

Today, it is believed that translation and Translation Studies, as a discipline, share partly common grounds with Contrastive Linguistics (Granger, 2003). By virtue of their object of study, the fields of Contrastive Linguistics and Translation Studies share a great deal of common ground. As noted by Chesterman (1998, as cited in Granger, 2003) they "are interested in seeing how 'the same thing' can be

said in other ways, although each field uses this information for different ends” (p. 25).

In Iran, shreds of evidence of the importance of translation date back to at least since the Qajar era (1795-1925 A.D.). The development of translation as a discipline is demonstrated through such events as the foundation of Dar-Al-Fonoon (1847). Other attempts were made in the Higher Institute (College) of Translation and Tehran University to establish the field of translation as a major area of study by developing coursework and methods of teaching (Karimihakkak, 1999). Finally, offering courses for translation programs at the M.A. level in Allameh Tabatabaee University as well as the Islamic Azad University-Science and Research Campus and many other universities reiterate the significance of translation.

Training translators seems to be an important component of any comprehensive translation program in Iran. This is why the present study aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the Iranian curricula for translation studies.

### *Curriculum Development: Basic Tenets*

By definition, curriculum development is a comprehensive, ongoing, cyclical process “to determine the needs of a group of learners; to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs; to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods, and materials; and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes” (Richards, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, the curriculum development process for translation programs should reflect needs analyses and ideologies about language, language teaching, and language learning.

According to Johnson (1989), there are four stages with corresponding decision-making roles and products –plus Evaluation– in curriculum development as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1

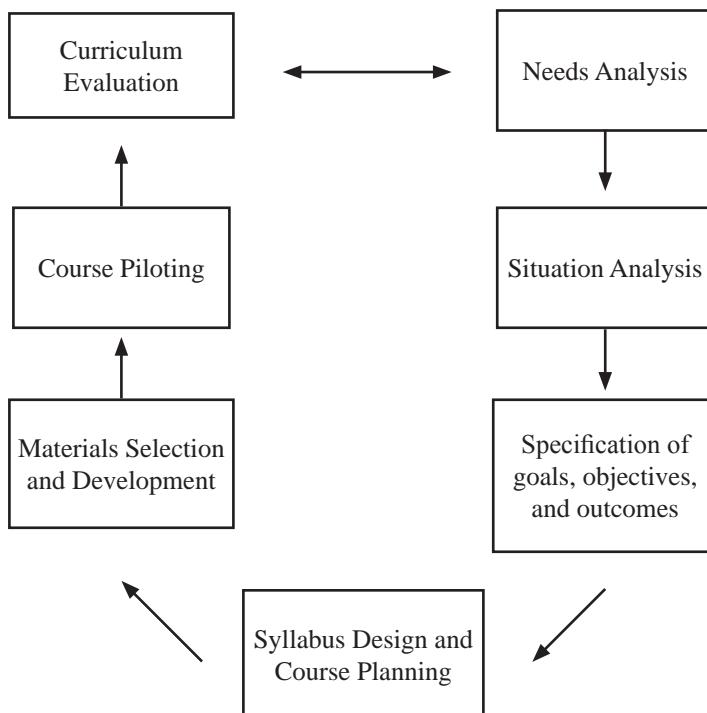
*Stages, Decision-making Roles and Products Plus Evaluation in Curriculum Development (Johnson, 1989, p. 3)*

Developmental Stages	Decision-making Roles	Products
1. Curriculum planning	Policy makers	Policy document
2. Specification: ends/ means	Needs analyst Methodologists	Syllabus
3. Program implementation	Materials writers Teacher trainers	Teaching materials Teacher training program
4. Classroom implementation	Teacher Learner	Teaching acts Learning acts
Evaluation		

Table 1 illustrates that the planning stage consists of those decisions taken before the development and implementation of the program. Ends specification relates to objectives, and means specification to method; program implementation involves teacher training and materials/resources development. Decision making at the classroom implementation stage has as its products the acts of the teacher and the learner.

According to an Ankara Resource Centre report (2007), curriculum development includes: needs analysis, situation analysis, specification of goals, objectives and outcomes, syllabus design and course planning, materials selection and development, course piloting, and curriculum evaluation (p. 1).

Figure 1: Curriculum Development Cycle



As shown in Figure 1, the process whereby a curriculum is developed is cyclic. Learners' needs should be analyzed as the first step, then, the teaching/learning situations should be analyzed by the curriculum planner which will be followed by the goals and objectives specification. After the curriculum is developed, the materials to be used in the classroom are developed and actually used by teachers. Finally, the curriculum can undergo evaluation on a needs-analysis basis given there is a mutual relation between evaluating a curriculum and the needs for which the curriculum has been developed.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated the authenticity of the current curriculum for translation studies at the national level (Iranian curriculum). Even with the pedagogically-acceptable practices of translation both in Iran and worldwide, translator trainees' achievement has always been a matter of concern in Iran. Despite the Iranian Ministry of Higher Education providing translator trainees with curricula and course syllabi based on specified objectives, there are still problems such as the concurrency of translation teaching and language teaching, practices in translation from Persian into a foreign language, lack of teacher specialization and vagueness of the curriculum and syllabi (Mirzaibrahim, 2003). Mollanazar (2003) believed that the content of the current Iranian curricula for teaching translation is more compatible with 'Translation Studies' than 'Translator Training' which calls into question the appropriateness of such curricula. Furthermore, Miremadi

(2003), pointing to the problems of the current curricula, enumerated a number of characteristics for a competent translator including, a command in his/her mother tongue; knowledge of translation principles; familiarity with philosophical argumentations and question/answer principles; and literary components. Ziahosseini (2003) emphasized the importance of curriculum design in any program for training translators focusing on the fact that linguistic knowledge is an inseparable element that must be taken into account in designing curriculum and syllabi. Also, Heidarian (2003) pointed to the lack of agreement between the names of certain syllabi and the syllabi themselves and the lack of agreement between certain course credits and their corresponding reference textbooks as problems in translation M.A. courses.

Based on the above-mentioned points, this study tried to answer the following questions:

**Q1:** Is the present curriculum deficient in providing the students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to meet the challenges facing them in the process of translating at the undergraduate level?

**Q2:** Is the present curriculum deficient in providing the students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to meet the challenges facing them in the process of translating at the graduate level?

**Q3:** Does the current translation studies curriculum at the undergraduate level show serious shortcomings when compared to the curriculum used in similar areas internationally?

**Q4:** Does the current translation studies curriculum at the graduate level show serious shortcoming when compared to the curriculum used in similar areas internationally?

**Q5:** Do the methods currently used for training translators lack the necessary theoretical backgrounds at the undergraduate level?

**Q6:** Do the methods currently used for training translators lack the necessary theoretical backgrounds at the graduate level?

**Q7:** Do students have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at the undergraduate level?

**Q8:** Do teachers have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at the undergraduate level?

**Q9:** Do students have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at the graduate level?

**Q10:** Do teachers have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at the graduate level?

**Q11:** Do experienced translators in Iran consider the current curriculum to be deficient for training professional translators?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formed to be investigated:

**H1:** The present curriculum is deficient in providing the students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to meet the challenges facing them in the process of translating at undergraduate level.

**H2:** The present curriculum is deficient in providing the students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to meet the challenges facing them in the process of translating at graduate level.

**H3:** The current translation studies curriculum at the undergraduate level shows serious shortcoming when compared with the curriculum used in similar areas internationally.

**H4:** The current translation studies curriculum at the graduate level shows serious shortcoming when compared with the curriculum used in similar areas internationally.

**H5:** The methods currently used for training translators lack the necessary theoretical backgrounds at undergraduate level.

**H6:** The methods currently used for training translators lack the necessary theoretical backgrounds at graduate level.

**H7:** Students have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at undergraduate level.

**H8:** Teachers have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at undergraduate level.

**H9:** Students have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at graduate level.

**H10:** Teachers have negative views concerning Iranian curricula for translation studies at graduate level.

**H11:** Experienced translators in Iran consider the current curriculum to be deficient for training professional translators.

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

The subjects of the study consisted of five groups. The five groups, as described below, represent the population of the study, that is, the Iranian translator trainees in the Azad University (all branches nationwide) as well as translation trainers and professional translators throughout the country. The reasons why five groups of participants were selected were: (a) teachers and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as translation experts were the foundations for the formation of the hypotheses of the study; (b) the study was supposed to be conducted nationwide so the samples had to represent the population of the study; and (c) a possible negative view or the deficiency of the Iranian curricula for translation programs had to be hypothesized as a rationale for the comparative study at the international level.

The first group of the study, the undergraduate (B.A.) group, consisted of 200 Iranian senior undergraduate translator-trainees that were selected from among the senior undergraduate students studying in the Islamic Azad University (all branches nationwide). This contains at least eight universities, that is, one university in each region of the country namely:

- The Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon
- The Islamic Azad University at Lahijan
- The Islamic Azad University at Tabriz
- The Islamic Azad University at Hamedan
- The Islamic Azad University at Rasht
- The Islamic Azad University at Tehran (Central Branch)
- The Islamic Azad University at Khorasgan (Isfahan)
- The Islamic Azad University at Mashad

The average age of the undergraduate subjects at the time of carrying out the study was 28-30 years.

The second group of the study, the graduate (M.A.) group, consisted of 100 Iranian senior graduate translator-trainees. They were selected from all those Islamic Azad University branches which offered translation at graduate level. This encompasses five universities namely:

- The Islamic Azad University at Bandar Abbas
- The Islamic Azad University at Tehran South Branch
- The Islamic Azad University at Tehran Science and Research Campus
- The Islamic Azad University at Tehran Central Branch
- The Islamic Azad University at Shiraz

The average age of the graduate subjects at the time of carrying out the study was 30-33 years.

The third group of the study, the translator trainers for the undergraduate level, consisted of teachers whose classes were observed. The eight teachers who taught the undergraduate trainees of the study were asked to participate in the study: their classes were observed during four 90-minute sessions for each teacher. The courses observed included courses on theoretical and practical aspects of translation.

The fourth group of the study, the translator trainers for graduate level, consisted of teachers whose classes were observed. The five teachers who taught the graduate trainees of the study were asked to participate in the study: their classes were observed during four 90-minute sessions for each teacher. The courses observed included courses on the theoretical and the practical aspects of translation.

The fifth group of the study, the expert group, consisted of 5 professional experts in translation who participated in the interview portion of the study. There were two criteria for the selection of the professional translator group. The first criterion was having at least 5 years of experience in teaching translation at different levels, the second criterion was having practical experience in translating different works, including textbooks, novels, articles, etc.

### *Instrumentation and Procedures*

To test the hypotheses of the study, a triangulation approach was adopted (Mackey and Gass, 2005). The justification for triangulation was that a translation test was needed to show the Iranian translator trainees' deficits in translation. Questionnaires were needed to determine participants' views on translation curriculum. And, for a comparative study, translators' views on the Iranian curricula were necessary.

Hence, the instrumentation in this study included five sections:

- Translation test
- Questionnaire for translation trainees
- Questionnaire for translation teachers
- Observation of translation classes (theory and practice)
- Interview of translation experts

The trainees' translation test consisted of translating four short semi-specialized paragraphs of different genres. The genres were entitled: "Instructions," "Journalistic-Economical," "Social," and "Journalistic-Political." In fairness to the trainees, paragraphs of scientific genres were not selected since there was no scientific course for translation practice included in the Iranian curriculum. This, omission, might bring into question the reliability and validity of the test.

Each paragraph contained about 100 words and was selected from the trainees' different teacher-made materials used in classes as well as textbooks. Two points were taken into consideration at the time of selecting the text extracts. First, the difficulty level of the passages was calculated using Edward Fry's index of readability (Farhady, Birjandi & Jafarpour, 2000). The readability degree of the passages was shown to be highly correlated for the passages at undergraduate and graduate levels. Also, the cross point between the average number of sentences and the average number of syllables per each 100 words did not fall in the gray area of the graph. (If the passage readability falls in the gray area, the grade level scores for the passage are invalid.) The second consideration when selecting text was the reliability of the passages, which was calculated through the KR-21 formula and was indicated as  $R=0.6$  which was deemed significant, given the maximum reliability had to be +1.

The questionnaires for the trainees were made up of 108 questions for the undergraduate group and 89 questions for the graduate group based on the current translation curriculum and methods. The questionnaires were used to elicit the trainees' needs towards becoming a translator. The points that were emphasized in the questionnaires for trainees covered different aspects of the Iranian translation program including: translation theory, translation practice, translation methods, textbooks, course credits, interpretation, literature, culture and the subjects' knowledge of Persian as their mother tongue. The final version of the questionnaire was developed after questions had been revised based on the comments of three colleagues and the outcomes of a pilot administration to 40 senior trainers in the Azad University at Tonekabon (Iran).

Four observation forms (checklists) were designed for the study. These included a number of common and widely-used topics in Translation Studies, which were gathered from three main sources: (a) translation textbooks, (b) national and international syllabi, and (c) experts' views on translation studies. The forms were used to observe translation teaching classes to find out which translation teaching methods had been used by the eight trainers who taught the undergraduate trainees and the five trainers who taught the graduate trainees of the study.

Five professional translators participated in the study interviews. There were two criteria used to select the professional translator group: (a) having years of experience in teaching translation at different levels, and (b) having practical experience in translating different works including textbooks, novels, articles, etc. The rationale behind conducting interviews in the study was to obtain the participants' insights, expectations, and impressions concerning the achievements of translation studies graduates, nationwide. There were 15 questions in the interview form.

Curricula for translation studies from 25 universities in other countries (Tables 2 and 3) were used (cluster sampling, random selection) in this study for a more detailed comparison with the Iranian B.A. and M.A. translation curricula. Given a main purpose of this study to investigate the effect of translation program curricula at the B.A. and the M.A. levels nationally and internationally, it was important to understand the details of translation program curricula used in a variety of countries. Curricula at the B.A. and the M.A. levels from other countries were obtained through online internet searches. An analysis of the search results was the primary means of determining if the curricula were similar or different in terms of framework and purpose, discerning standards and benchmarks, and if there were any gaps in the Iranian curriculum.

*Table 2*  
*Foreign Universities Offering a B.A. Degree in Translation Surveyed in the Study*

University	Country
Université de Moncton	Canada
Swansea University	England
Kent State University	USA
College Université de Saint-Boniface	France
University of Warwick	England
Université de Louvain	France
U.A.E. University	U.A.E.
Newcastle University	England
University of South Africa	South Africa
Hacettepe University	Turkey
Brigham Young University	USA
Total: 11	

*Table 3*  
*Foreign Universities that Offered a M.A. Degree in Translation Surveyed in the Study*

University	Country
University of London	England
University of Bogaziçi	Turkey
University of Western Sydney	Australia
Kent State University	USA
Université de Louvain	France
University of Tampere	Finland
Heriot-Watt University	England
University of Birmingham	England
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain
Monterey Institute of International Studies	USA
Middlesex University	England
London Metropolitan University	England
University of Ottawa	Canada
Aston University	England
University of Massachusetts	USA
University of South Africa	South Africa
Hacettepe University	Turkey
Total: 17	

## FINDINGS

The results obtained supported all hypotheses of the study except the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> hypotheses, both related to the curriculum at the graduate level. This section provides a detailed analysis of all eleven hypotheses.

### *Hypotheses 1 and 2*

The findings of the study supported H1 and H2 of the study. The findings indicated that the undergraduate and the graduate trainees as well as trainers insisted on the importance of the four skills of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in addition to literature and culture. Most undergraduate trainees (more than 70%) considered Persian studies unimportant in the current translation curriculum, while the graduate trainees as well as the trainers for the undergraduate and graduate levels insisted on the importance of Persian studies in the curriculum for translation programs.

The results obtained from the translation test analysis indicated a weak translation performance by the undergraduate  $\bar{X} = 0.3$  out of 20 and the graduate trainees  $\bar{X} = 2.3$  out of 20. In spite of the fact that the mean score is higher for the graduate participants, they were expected to perform more competently in the test. Furthermore, although the undergraduate and the graduate participants were exposed to the same paragraphs in the test, the graduate group failed to achieve a more acceptable result as compared to the undergraduate group.

The results obtained from the trainee questionnaires demonstrated that most undergraduate and the graduate trainees (more than 74%) had chosen translation because they had been interested in the field. Also, the trainers for the undergraduate and the graduate levels believed their trainees had selected translation due to interest. The results indicated that most undergraduate trainees (more than 69%) wanted translation for future use while the trainers for the undergraduate level believed most of their trainees (more than 80%) were merely seeking a degree in translation. Both graduate trainees and the trainers for the graduate level noted an inclination toward translation for future use rather than as a mere degree.

Most undergraduate and graduate trainees (more than 76%) as well as trainers believed no courses should be omitted from the Iranian curricula for translation program while both sets of respondents suggested the addition of some courses to the current curricula. Furthermore, most trainees at both levels (more than 60%) and the trainers for the undergraduate and graduate levels believed that translators should not be trained for all fields, rather, they should be exposed to training in one or two specific fields of translation such as scientific translation, political translation, and/or literary translation. Finally, the results indicated that the trainees did not feel competent enough to be a translator.

### *Hypotheses 3 and 4*

The findings supported H3 but rejected H4 of this study. Accordingly, it was found that the Iranian curriculum for translation program at the undergraduate level differed significantly with its corresponding curricula internationally (H3) while the graduate curriculum was much more similar across countries (H4). The results from the foreign curricula analysis revealed that the Iranian undergraduate curricula differed in some key aspects with the foreign curricula. These aspects are:

Admissions conditions and entrance exam. Significant differences were indicated to exist between the Iranian curricula and the foreign curricula in terms of the form of Entrance Exams. Before entrance, the Iranian candidates for an undergraduate major in translation are required to take part in an exam with content based on a number of high school courses including English grammar, reading comprehension, and vocabulary knowledge, as well as some non-English courses including Persian grammar, Arabic grammar, and Theology (Iranian Universities Entrance Exam Handbook, 2010). No practical translation test is taken by the candidates. The Iranian candidates for a graduate major in translation are required to take part in an exam consisting of the following undergraduate courses: (a) Theories of Translation, (b) Persian Language Structure, (c) English Linguistics, and (d) Practical Translation (multiple-choice tests of translation for various genres). In contrast, University of South Africa curriculum required the graduate trainees to submit four papers on translation issues before they could apply for a translation major (University of South Africa, 2009). There, translation has been defined as a specialization among specializations of linguistics. Moreover, the University of Massachusetts, as another example, requires candidates to have the following qualifications at the time of admission for a translation program at the graduate level:

- Minimum undergraduate GPA of 2.75
- A bachelor's degree or equivalent

- Two official transcripts
- Two letters of recommendation
- Proficiency in English
- Excellent knowledge of one foreign language
- Sample of translation or critical essay
- The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test
- Foreign students need to have taken the TOEFL test or have attended a North American college or university on a full-time basis for one year (University of Massachusetts, 2008).

The purpose of the program. The purpose of administering a translation program at the undergraduate and the graduate levels presented by the Iranian Ministry of Higher Education has been very briefly stated and contains no clarified and operationally-defined objectives compared with that of the international curricula; rather, it has mainly emphasized “achieving the proficiency in language skills” and “achieving the necessary skills as a translator” (Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, 1991, p. 3). In contrast, in the foreign curricula each main concept has been clearly defined, for instance, in the curriculum presented by Aston University (England), the term Translator has been defined along with his responsibilities as a translator and the community expectations of him (Aston University, 2010), or in the Université de Moncton (Canada), concepts such as ‘dissertation’ or ‘seminar’ have been defined in terms of purposes and activities (Université de Moncton, 2009).

Type of courses offered. The Iranian undergraduate curricula were found to be significantly different in content from the international curricula. It lacks a number of basic courses related to the knowledge and skills of translation. One major difference was that most international curricula seemed to address updates in other fields such as science and technology. For instance, Hacettepe University in Turkey offered a course entitled “Translation of Texts on Banking” and a course on “International Relations” (Hacettepe University, 2008). Finland’s University of Tampere offered a course on “Digital Literacy and Academic Knowledge Management” (University of Tampere, 2011) which cannot be found in the Iranian curricula.

There were also differences between the Iranian and foreign curricula in terms of practical courses offered for translation studies. Aston University curriculum required the trainees to spend their third year of university education abroad, i.e. in the country of their target language (Aston University, 2010). Kent State University curriculum for the undergraduate level required the trainees to conduct a case study in translation and report the results to their trainers. Also, Kent State University offered translation as a B.S. major instead of a B.A. (undergraduate) major. The curriculum, for such a major, included courses in different fields such as biology, economy, geology, etc. (Kent State University, 2011)

Order of the courses offered. A number of universities offered their courses in a specific order that differed significantly with the Iranian curricula. For example, the University of Tampere in Finland offered translation courses from the undergraduate level to the graduate level in a sequence from “Basic,” to “Intermediate,” “Advanced” and “Dissertation” (University of Tampere, 2011). The University of London offered its courses of translation as “Language-Specific Practical Translation Courses,” “Translation Studies Courses” and “Electronic Communication and Publishing Modules” (University of London, 2008).

Emphasizing specific courses. Foreign translation programs had differing areas of focus. For example, Swansea University emphasized Computer-Assisted Translation, Machine Translation and Translation Skills Laboratory (Swansea University, n.d.). Kent State University offered translation education as a B.S. rather than a B.A. degree. Its curricula for translation studies at the undergraduate level focused more on courses such as Social Science, Business, Fine Arts and Civilization (Kent State University, 2011). University of Louvain offered courses on International Relations, Informatique, Psychology, Philosophy, Economy and Sociology at the B.A. level (Université de Louvain, 2011).

Some programs emphasized translation skills and theoretical courses. The University of United Arab Emirates curriculum for the undergraduate level contained courses on Modern Media Communication as well as courses from other programs such as Morphology, Syntax and Literary Texts Analysis (University of United Arab Emirates, 2008). The undergraduate translation curriculum at the Newcastle University emphasized Translation Workshop (20 Credits), Translation Practice and Principles (30 Credits) and Research Methods in Translating and Interpreting (10 Credits) (Newcastle University, 2008). The University of London insisted, in its curriculum for the undergraduate level, on Translating from and to the

target language, Translation Theories and Internet/Computer-Assisted Translation (University of London, 2008).

University of South Africa curricula for the undergraduate translation studies contained courses such as European Institutions and Organizations, Translation Tools, Note-Taking and Sight Translation (University of South Africa, 2009).

Culture was emphasized in some curricula. The University of Warwick University translation curriculum emphasized language culture and the British Cultural Studies (University of Warwick, 2010). In contrast, University of Birmingham curriculum for undergraduate translation studies focused on the target language culture, thus, included courses such as Cultural Inquiry (1), Cultural Inquiry (2) as well as Modernity, Identity and Culture. Its curriculum for the graduate translation studies included the courses Nations and their Neighbors I & II (University of Birmingham, 2008).

### *Hypotheses 5 and 6*

H5 of this study was supported while H6 was rejected. Traces of insufficiency were found in the theoretical part of the undergraduate Iranian curriculum while the graduate translation curriculum was at an acceptable level in terms of theoretical richness.

The results from the interview analysis indicated that semantic translation, free translation, literal translation and word-for-word translation were the current methods of translation used in Iran. Current problems of the Iranian curricula include lack of sufficient practice and discrepancy between theory and practice in the curriculum. Communicative translation appears to have been ignored in the Iranian translation program curriculum.

Interviewees expressed opinions on whether courses should be kept or dropped from the curriculum. Interview respondents suggested that Foundations of Translation, Teaching and Testing, and practical courses of translation had to be maintained while certain general courses and Phonology had to be removed. Psychology of Learning, Pragmatics, and Semantics, Note-Taking, Morphology, Persian Syntax, Culture and Translation Workshop were courses suggested to be added to the current curricula for translation program. Teaching Persian grammar was considered necessary at the undergraduate and the graduate levels. Literature, culture, special terminologies, and practical courses, including scientific translation, were introduced as new courses that could be added to the current curricula to enhance the effectiveness of translation programs.

No compatibility was believed to exist between the textbook and the undergraduate curriculum while the graduate curriculum and the textbooks were thought of as compatible. Internationally authored textbooks were considered appropriate for teaching the theory of translation and the domestically authored textbooks were considered appropriate for working on the practical aspects of translation. At the undergraduate level the amount of theory was commented to be less than the amount of practice in the curriculum, while at the graduate level, the theory was thought of as a greater proportion of the curriculum than the practice. A curriculum with more practical courses on translation which could focus on the process of translation was preferred by the interview respondents. Paradoxically, concerning the degree of emphasis on the theory and practice of translation, the interviewees believed the trainers had to focus on more theory at the undergraduate level and more practice at the graduate level.

Multiple-choice tests, cloze tests (a passage with each 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> word deleted except for the first and the last sentences, to be filled in by the translator trainees, the full translation of the passage) and production tests were mentioned by the interviewees as the current authentic ways to test translation.

Lack of motivation and problems of future career were reasons other than the curricula for the failure in training translators.

### *Hypotheses 7, 8, 9 and 10*

Hypotheses 7, 8, 9, and 10 all dealt with instructor and trainer impressions of the adequacy of the Iranian translation curriculum. The findings of the study supported H7, H8, H9 and H10 of this study. The data obtained from the questionnaires for the participant trainees and the trainers at the undergraduate level demonstrated that 70.5% of the undergraduate trainees as well as 63% of the trainers at the undergraduate levels believed that the curriculum for training translators was not sufficient in satisfying the trainees'

needs. Also, 51% of the graduate trainees as well as 59% of the participant trainers at the graduate level believed that there were deficiencies in the curriculum.

### *Hypotheses 11*

The eleventh hypothesis of the study addressed the view of participant experts (experienced translators) on the Iranian curricula for translation. This hypothesis was supported. The interviewees of the study believed the current undergraduate curriculum for training translators in Iran was deficient in some aspects. The undergraduate practical courses of translation consist of only 2 credits (a total of 34 hours) (Iranian Curriculum for Undergraduate Translation Program, 1991). During this period of time, few texts can be translated and revised in various genres (generally not more than 10 paragraphs of about 200 words). This limited number of texts is not sufficient for mastering the necessary principles and techniques of translating a specific genre while. In contrast, in the Newcastle University (England), translation practical courses consist of more than 10 credits (Newcastle University, 2008). Some foreign universities place much greater emphasis on the practical courses of translation.

The participant experts agreed that the phonology course should be omitted from the undergraduate curriculum. They noted the course was rarely relevant to written translation issues; rather, it could be applicable in oral interpretation, provided the written translation and the oral interpretation were offered separately as two different but interrelated majors of study in the Iranian translation program. The phonology course was not included in the undergraduate curriculum of the universities surveyed in this study except for Kent State University (USA) that offered a 3-credit Phonetics course (Newcastle University, 2008).

The interviewees further agreed that a number of courses needed to be added to the undergraduate curriculum. These included courses related to literature, culture, special terminologies and practical courses including scientific translation. They noted getting acquainted with the second language and target language cultures as well as literature assist translators in mastering second language texts semantically, rendering a more acceptable translation. This finding is supported in the review of undergraduate curricula conducted for this study. For example, the University of United Arab Emirates offered 12 course credits of target language literature and culture (French) (University of United Arab Emirates, 2008). Other courses suggested by the interviewees to be added to the graduate curriculum were: Psychology of Learning, Conference Translation/Interpretation. They are compatible with what Miremadi (2003) suggested.

Finally, the participant interviewees commented testing methods of translation. They thought that translation could be tested via multiple-choice and cloze tests as well as translation production tests. They suggested the multiple-choice and the cloze tests since these could be scored objectively compared with the production type of translation tests.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight deficiencies in the current Iranian curricula for translation programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The findings also suggest potential curricular modifications in the undergraduate and graduate translation programs in Iran.

Any suggested curricular modifications must take into consideration the practical constraint that undergraduate programs may not exceed 4 years and graduate programs may not exceed 2 years, both due to the official obligations of the Iranian Ministry of Higher Education and the fact that the approved programs are used nationwide. Yet there are still a number of course changes that can be made to the current curricula without impacting overall program length.

### *Suggested Courses to Be Added to the Undergraduate Curriculum*

At the undergraduate level, the following course credits were suggested to be added:

English Culture. The significance of culture in teaching translation cannot be ignored. According to Karamanian (2004), translation, involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding and en-coding. As cultures are increasingly brought into greater contact with one another, multicultural considerations are brought to bear to an ever-increasing degree. Also, universities such as Warwick (4 credits) and Louvain (2 credits) offer course credits on cultural studies (Université of Louvain, 2011; University of Warwick,

2010). As a result, a course on English culture (at least 2 credits) is helpful for the Iranian trainees to obtain the necessary insights.

Persian Studies. Persian language plays a significant role in translation for the Iranian trainees. Since Iranian trainees translate various text genres mostly from English into Persian during their translation education, they should be able to present a translation that is natural to the native speakers of Persian. Yet, the course credits on Persian language in the current translation curriculum at the undergraduate level are not sufficient to enable the trainees to use a well-formed Persian in their translations. This is also supported by the results of the translation test analysis of this study. Accordingly, the undergraduate participants' mean scores on the translation test indicate that their translations contain problems in Persian language including grammatically or semantically ill-formed sentences. Hence, the following course credits (at least 2 credits for each course) on Persian language are suggested to be added to the current curriculum for the translation program at the B.A. level: (a) Persian Reading Comprehension, (b) Persian Writing, (c) Persian Prose, (d) Persian Poetry and (e) Persian Culture.

Scientific Translation. The current Iranian undergraduate curriculum for translation contains no course credits on translation of scientific texts. Consequently, Iranian trainees fail to have any practice on texts such as biology, zoology, physics, chemistry, or mathematics. This may result in the emergence of a problem in the trainees' future career: they will avoid translating such texts. The significance of scientific texts can be emphasized since some foreign universities have offered courses on this field of study. For example, Université de Moncton offered in its curriculum a 3-credit course on theatre text translation as well as a 3-credit course on commercial translation (Université de Moncton, 2009). Université de Louvain offered a 2-credit course titled: "Scientific Text Problems and Translation Techniques" (University of Louvain, 2011) and Hacettepe University offered a 4-credit course titled: "Language Use in Different Fields" and a 2-credit course named: "Medical Translation" (Hacettepe University, 2008). Thus, for the Iranian translation trainees at the undergraduate level, a course of scientific translation (at least 4 credits due to the variety of scientific genres) is suggested.

Thesis: The Iranian curriculum for translation at the undergraduate level contains no actual and official thesis as a course credit. There are term projects for various translation courses and the time restriction prevents the trainees to be able to translate a complete work into Persian. In "Individual Translation I & II" the trainees have the opportunity to translate by themselves and check their own abilities in translating. Yet, the shortcoming of such an activity lies in the fact that most texts translated in these courses are not complete works; rather, they are mostly part of a larger work (e.g. a book) and there have been cases in which the assigned text has been repeatedly translated. Therefore, a course of thesis (2 to 4 credits) can be suggested to be included in the undergraduate curriculum for translation under the following conditions: (a) the assigned text should not be previously translated, (b) the assigned text should be a complete work rather than a part, (c) the assigned text genre should contribute to the language and the culture of the country (Iran), and (d) if the assigned text genre is scientific, it should present a new phenomenon to the target language readership.

#### *Suggested Courses to Be Omitted from the Undergraduate Curriculum*

At the undergraduate level, the following course credits were suggested to be deleted:

Principles and Foundations of Translation. This two-credit course can be combined with another similar 2-credit course named "Principles and Methodology of Translation" to make a 2-credit course named "Theories of Translation." The content of the two courses currently overlaps.

Phonology. The phonology course is suggested to be omitted from the curriculum as it mainly contributes to teaching English as a foreign language and not training translators. If not omitted totally from the curriculum, it could be offered as an elective course for those students who need further practice on prosodic aspects of language in their interpretation or consecutive translation studies.

#### *Suggested Courses to Be Added to the Graduate Curriculum*

At the graduate level, the following course credits are suggested to be added:

Practical Translation. There are only two practical courses of translation in the current curriculum for the translation program at the graduate level. The first one is "Criticism of Translated Works" in which

students may correct possible translation problems and the second is “Translation Workshop” in which the trainees get acquainted with practical aspects of translation. Hence, the Iranian graduate trainees do not actually translate texts of various genres as they did during their undergraduate education. In addition, a survey of the foreign curricula for translation programs at the M.A. level reveal that they have emphasized the practical aspects of translation by offering several course credits on translation practice. Université de Moncton offered about 15 credits of various practical translation courses (Université de Moncton, 2009); The University of London offered 10 course credits on advanced translation from various source languages into English (University of London, 2008); Kent State University offered Translation Practice (2 credits), Literary and Cultural Translation (2 credits), Scientific, Technical and Medical Translation (2 credits) and Commercial, Legal and Diplomatic Translation (2 credits) (Kent State University, 2011). Thus, it is suggested that a course of translation practice of at least 2 credits be added to the graduate curriculum for translation programs in Iran.

Oral Interpretation. According to Miremadi (2003), Iranian translation trainees have insufficient communication with the real context in which oral interpretation is implemented. The graduate curriculum for translation program in Iran lacks course credits on oral interpretation that may be applicable to the trainees’ future translation career, for example, conference interpretation. Regarding the trainees’ future use of translation and due to most trainees’ failure in their oral interpretation performance, it is suggested that a 4-credit course of oral interpretation be added to the current graduate curriculum for translation in Iran.

Dissertation. There is a course of Dissertation (4 credits) in the current graduate curriculum in Iran. The trainees work on their dissertation topics descriptively (library research), experimentally, or they criticize a translated work. No graduate dissertation in the field of translation is submitted in the form of translating a work. The course of dissertation can be modified in the graduate curriculum to allow trainees the opportunity to translate a complete work (book) on various genres including literary, social, economic, technical, etc. from English into Persian or from Persian into English. The conditions mentioned for undergraduate theses should be followed: (a) the assigned text should not be previously translated, (b) the assigned text should be a complete work rather than a part of a larger work, (c) the assigned text genre should contribute to the language and the culture of the country (Iran), and (d) if the assigned text genre is scientific, it should present a new phenomenon to the target language readership.

#### *Suggested Courses to Be Omitted from the Graduate Curriculum*

The findings of the study give no insight or feedback for an actual omission of any course credit from the graduate curriculum for translation programs in Iran. The comparative study between the Iranian graduate curriculum for translation and similar international curricula indicates that the Iranian curriculum has been able to satisfy the needs of the graduate translator trainees in terms of theory and practice although such curriculum shows more deficiency in terms of the practical aspects of translation in comparison with the undergraduate curriculum.

### CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed traces of deficiency in the Iranian curricula for translation programs, significant differences between the Iranian and the foreign curricula for translation programs, and the negative views of the participant groups of the study on the current curricula. Proposing a modified version of the curricula can include objectively-defined key terms such as goals, course credits, written translators and oral interpreters and the entrance requirements. Furthermore, adding certain course credits to the curricula both at the undergraduate and the graduate levels can help university teachers to maneuver better over the syllabus and classroom techniques in order to obtain more reliable results—more competent translators.

Theoretically, the findings of the current study are significant in that they provide a refreshingly unprejudiced contribution to translation theory through adopting a new approach to translator training, particularly, curriculum development. The study considers the current Iranian curriculum for training professional translators deficient, and seeks to give way to a more appropriate curriculum planning by making suggestions to the challenges facing the translator-training programs at the undergraduate and the

postgraduate levels.

Pedagogically, the findings of the current study can be of use to a people involved in both the theory and the practice of translation. Translation trainers may employ the results of this study as a new orientation in their real practice of teaching translation in the classroom. Language testers will use the findings of this study in their procedures of psychometry and test construction based on what has been instructed in classes by trainers. Psychometrists, further, take into consideration the results of the current study in planning for group exams, such as university entrance exams or prerequisite proficiency exams for translation studies. Translation program evaluators can also benefit from the results of this study when they are presenting any assessment report on a given curricula or designed course for translation studies. Professional translators both as university trainers and as members of organizations, institutes or translation houses, can follow the major tenets of the model presented here in their professional/practical jobs in translation. The findings of this study can, further, be utilized by the Ministry of Higher Education to study and evaluate the content of various curricula in an international context. University students can take advantage of the results of the comparative model in their research projects on different fields particularly, applied linguistics. Finally, the results of this study can be utilized by various educational organizations such as the Ministry of Education for evaluating the content of the curricula of programs at the primary, intermediate, and advanced schools. Organizations can revise and update curricula for different programs by comparing them with corresponding international curricula in order to achieve the educational objectives and goals.

As for the proposed modified version of the curriculum, it gives insights into how to improve Iranian curricula for translation programs. In comparison with other curricula, the modified curricula are advantageous in that they have been presented based on a series of data collection procedures including the administration of translation tests as well as observing translation classes and interviewing teachers and experts in translation. In addition, since the modified curricula were formed based on a comparison with 25 international curricula for translation programs, they are expected to remove the existing deficiencies in the current Iranian curricula for translation programs by making them more compatible internationally. Thus, they are reliable enough to be employed at least within a domestic and nationwide framework of translator training.

The aim of this study is by no means suggesting that imitating other countries' curricula for a certain field of study will necessarily result in an optimized curriculum. Rather, improving the curriculum for translation programs that can enhance more success in training translators is intended. Surveying different curricula opens a new window to experts' approaches toward developing curriculum from which the most compatible approaches can be adopted, thought of, arranged or rearranged, and implemented.

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