Evaluating the Curriculum for M.A. English Translation in Iran: Is the Curriculum Effective for Students?

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum for M.A. English translation in Iranian universities regarding the students' perspectives to find its deficiencies and to propose some recommendations to make the curriculum compatible with students' needs. The study was done based on a quantitative research design using a researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaire was administrated to 341 M.A. and Ph.D. translation students in Iran. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test. The results revealed that the current curriculum was moderately effective in providing the students with the necessary translation competencies. The results indicated some courses including *Translation Workshop*, and *Theories of Translation* were effective. Whereas, some courses such as *Literary Criticism*, and *Philosophy of Education* were not effective enough to improve students' theoretical knowledge and practical translation competencies. Hence, modifications of the contents or curriculum are needed. To improve the curriculum, the top three practical courses should be added to the curriculum, and they include *Translation of Technical Texts*, *Interpretation Workshop*, and *Bilingual Editing Skills*. Additionally, the results of the independent samples *t*-test showed that M.A students agreed more than Ph.D. students that courses such as *Persian Writing*, *English Writing*, and *Sight Translation* should be added to the M.A. translation curriculum. Overall, the findings provide insights to the curriculum reform which is needed in the area of English translation.

Keywords**:** curriculum, evaluation, English translation, Master of Arts, translation students, translation competencies

1.   Introduction

English translation as a developing field of study and research is thriving in Iran. The curriculum of M.A. in English translation in Iran was developed by The Supreme Council of the Institute of Research and Planning in Higher Education in 1999. There is an integrated educational system in Iran, and universities are not allowed to develop an independent curriculum. Therefore, all universities in Iran must implement the curriculum designed by the Supreme Council of the Institute of Research and Planning in Higher Education. However, some major universities known as Mother Universities in Iran were able to change the English translation curriculum a little based on their goals and scope. Accordingly, all Iranian universities that offer a Master's program in English translation have the same curriculum. Although fifty-five universities currently in Iran attract hundreds of students at the M.A. level in English translation, the curriculum has not received the attention it deserves until recently and the officials have not changed it for a long time.

According to Abelha et al. (2020,) "higher education institutions are concerned with using strategies to enhance the development of competencies for graduate employability" (p.1). Salari and Khazaeefarid (2015) declared that it is the responsibility of universities to pay attention to teaching methods, teaching materials, the course contents, and instructors' characteristics. Universities should offer an effective translator training program. This program should have all the basic components of training. For instance, employing professional instructors, developing a well-structured curriculum, designing relevant and effective courses, and determining translation tasks and project-based on the market's requirements (Salari & Khazaeefarid, 2015). Olalla-Soler (2016) also stated that the purpose of translator training is to equip translation students with skills to effectively use appropriate documentation sources. It is the responsibility of universities to teach students the knowledge and skills they need to recognize cultural differences between two languages and transfer source language cultural items into functionally equivalent target language items. However, translator training does not satisfy the market demands because of an ineffective curriculum (Khazaeefarid, 2001). Hence, the main discussion is that the translator training curriculum is ineffective, ambiguous, too theoretical, and does not satisfy the market demands (Shahri et al., 2016). Mollanazar (2003) declared that the content of the current curriculum is more about *Translation Studies* rather than *Translator Training* which means that less attention is paid to practical knowledge in the theoretical part of the curriculum. Thus, some graduates complain

that they are not able to put their theoretical knowledge into practice because translation theories are taught separately from the translation practices (Jafari, 2013; Shahri et al., 2016).

Regarding curriculum deficiencies, many graduates believe that less attention is given to teaching translation skills, English and Persian language skills, and strategies for translating authentic technical texts (Nasrollahi & Farimani, 2017). Similarly, Chinese students at the master's level in the UK are requested to receive training in English for academic purposes (EAP) (Shei, 2005). Other shortcomings of the M.A curriculum in Iran are that the options of elective courses determined in the curriculum are few, translation devices are not presented, and interpretation skills and strategies for translating technical texts are not introduced (Shahri et al., 2016; Nasrollahi & Farimani, 2017). Accordingly, it appears that the curriculum has not met the demands of the society for which it was developed (Khazaeefarid & Khoshsaligheh, 2010). For instance, Abelha et al. (2020) in their study found that there is a gap between the translation competencies taught to students at universities and employers' demand for specific skills. In the same vein, Tran and Swierczek (2009) asserted that the competencies learned by translation students at universities are not in accordance with the employers' needs. "While employers prioritize learning, communication, information processing, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, lecturers lay their focus on decision-making, learning, and information processing skills to solve problems" (p. 580). Pham and Tran (2013) also said that the curriculum of translation in Vietnam is not in line with the demands of the employment market. The consequence of this is that the resources and investments are wasted but the needs of students and the demands of the market are not satisfied. In this regard, it is wise to regularly evaluate and update the curriculum for this field.

Consequently, this research evaluated the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the current M.A. in English translation curriculum presented in Iranian universities regarding the translation students' perspectives and identify what revisions are required to be made in the master's curriculum to remove its deficiencies and make it compatible with the current students' needs and the national translation market demands. This study answered the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of translation students about the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the required and elective courses offered in the curriculum for M.A in English translation in Iranian universities?

2. What are the perspectives of translation students regarding the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the instructional objectives offered in the curriculum for M.A. in Iranian universities?

3. What are the perspectives of students regarding the new recommended courses?

4. Is there any significant difference between the perspectives of M.A. translation students and Ph.D. students regarding the new recommended courses?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Curriculum

Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) mentioned that the curriculum is a set of instructional objectives and activities planned to facilitate students' development. The curriculum is a program of study which describes the intended aims and objectives, the course structure, the course content, teaching methods, learning strategies, and assessment methods, and also determines the learning materials and references (Grant, 2010). Print (1993) contended that curriculum development is the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating learning opportunities aimed to produce intended changes in students.

According to Richards (1995), six steps are required to be taken to develop a language curriculum including needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, testing, and evaluation. Graves (2000) proposed a model of curriculum development which includes eight parts namely: (a) defining the context, (b) assessing the needs, (c) articulating beliefs, (d) formulating goals and objectives, (e) organizing the course, (f) conceptualizing content, (g) developing materials, and (h) designing an assessment plan. Nation and Macalister (2010) have proposed the curriculum design model that contains three outside circles and three inner circles. The three outer circles stand for environment analysis, needs analysis, and the application of principles. In addition, the inner circle indicates the syllabus which consists of goals, content and sequencing, format and presentation, and as well as monitoring and assessment. As a final point, evaluation as the large outer circle is designed to evaluate whether the curriculum is satisfactory or unsatisfactory and where it requires upgrading and improvement.

However, relatively, some studies have been conducted to examine the efficiency of the existing M.A. English translation curriculum in Iran (Shahri et al., 2016, Torbatinezhad, 2014).

Some researchers in their studies concluded that the curriculum of English translation has some shortcomings and the Iranian translation graduates experience some difficulties after graduation as new translators. For instance, Razmjou (2001) stated that the curriculum of translator training in Iranian universities does not satisfy the needs of students and the demands of the present national translation market. Birjand and Nosratinia (2009) stated that the present curriculum is not effective enough to train specialized translators. Khazaeefarid and Khoshsaligheh (2010) compared the translation curriculum offered in Iran with the European translation curriculum and declared that in Iranian universities, the main emphasis is on teaching linguistics, literature, and language skills. They concluded that the existing translation curriculum could not provide the students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills in translation that they may need after graduation. Likewise, the authors (2018) asserted that the objectives of the Master's program in Iran are not explicitly mentioned; therefore, they suggested reviewing the classification of objectives and classifying them separately.

Another criticism against the curriculum was made by Heidarian (2003) who said the M.A. translation curriculum in Iran has some shortcomings including, inconsistency between some course titles and its title in the syllabus, inconsistency between some particular courses and their textbooks, and references, inappropriate textbooks, and out-of-date references. In addition, Heidarian (2003), Kaveh and Karimnia (2015) mentioned that some of the references and course books are obsolete and unrelated to the course objectives and should be removed or updated. Birjand and Nosratinia (2009) also stated that some course titles are not compatible with their content. They declared that some courses included in the curriculum are not effective enough to enhance students' language proficiency and translation competencies. Motallebzadeh et al. (2019) stated that courses congruent with the objective of training professional translators, specifically in some fields such as humanities, social sciences, etc. are not offered; therefore, considering the limited number of practical courses offered in the curriculum of M.A. translation in Iran, it cannot be conclusively ascertained whether this program has been successful in training professional translators or not. In addition, Jamalimanesh and Ghazizadeh (2010) introduced some of the graduates' opinions on their weaknesses including; lack of job-specific translation skills and knowledge, lack of proficiency in Persian and English languages, lack of translation skills for different genres, lack of ability to use encyclopedias and similar resources. Rodríguez de Céspedes (2017) also asserted that translation graduates in the United Kingdom are in lack some skills and

competencies to meet the market demand. The major concern of translation graduates is to find a job and apply for it in the current economic environment.

Additionally, Mirzaibrahim (2003) found some deficiencies in the existing curriculum of English translation including a vague and ambiguous curriculum, a lack of emphasis on translation practice from Persian into the English language, and simultaneous teaching of translation skills and language skills. According to Miremadi (2003), some difficulties which students face at the master's level are a lack of proficiency in the first language and translation competencies. Besides, Mollanazar (2003) stated that it is required to determine appropriate and relevant courses in the master's curriculum to meet the students' demands and satisfy the needs of the market. Motallebzadeh et al. (2019) also mentioned that although one of the objectives of the program is training translation researchers, it seems that no courses have been designed corresponding to this objective. For example, we hope to train translation researchers just by taking a 4-credit thesis, albeit in some universities it can be replaced by a literary or scientific translation project. Concerning these problems and issues and based on related literature review, a need analysis is essential for updating and improving the current curriculum. In this regard, it's necessary to focus on students' needs and wants. Khazaeefarid and Khoshsaligheh (2010) as well argued that market needs analysis, national research, and deep study of the syllabus of other highly ranked universities are needed to improve the current syllabus.

2.2   Needs Analysis

*"*Teachers, learners, administrators, employees, parents, and stakeholders may all have different views as to what needs are" (Wahyono & Puspitasari, 2016, p. 1008). According to Yulia (2020*),* needs are the students' requirements, and the target needs can be analyzed into three categories including necessities, wants, and lacks. Richards (2001, p. 51) asserted that "the procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as needs analysis". "Needs analysis is to fill the gap of what a program lacks" (Wahyono & Puspitasari, 2016, p. 1009). *Needs* analysis is the most important information-gathering part that lays the basis for the entire process of designing and evaluating any education curriculum (Leagans, 1964; Scriven & Roth, 1978; Boone et al., 2002). "Needs analysis is a systematic set of procedures undertaken to set priorities and make decisions about programs or organizational improvement and allocation of resources" (Witkin &

Altschuld, 1995, p.3 4). "A needs analysis is the foundation to create learning objectives, choosing activities, and creating learning materials" (Purnamasari, 2020, p. 706). In this regard, "the information gathered by doing needs analysis provides essential input for setting course goals and deciding what goes into a course" (Macalister & Nation, 2019, p. 68). The needs analysis also seeks to propose courses, techniques, and materials according to the needs and recognizes whether the design is appropriate to the intended objectives (Gilb & Finzi, 1998). However, "these data could come from a variety of sources and can be collected by various methods (e.g., interview, observation, questionnaire, or mixed methods)" (Purnamasari, 2020, p. 710). Therefore, "all of the differences can be gathered by conducting an appropriate needs analysis" (Purnamasari, 2020, p. 706). "By doing needs analysis specific and systematic information and fact-findings of learners and learning demands would match curriculum, syllabus, materials and other resources needed by a group of learners" (Purnamasari, 2020, p. 710). Therefore, in the present study, a need analysis remains central to collecting information about the problems translation students are experiencing in the existing curriculum and determining if the curriculum effectively addresses the needs of translation students.

3.   Methodology

3.1   Participants

The participants were M.A. and Ph.D. students and graduates of the English translation in Iran. Ph.D. students were included in the present study because they, as translation students, who passed all necessary implemented courses at the M.A. level, have a general knowledge of the main deficiencies and shortcomings of the curriculum whether in obligatory and optional courses or instructional objectives included in the curriculum. Based on this knowledge, they can evaluate the appropriateness of the courses which were not designed in the current curriculum but they can effectively improve students' knowledge and skills in the field of Translation Studies. The participants were asked to fill out the *M.A. English Translation Curriculum Effectiveness* questionnaire. To do so, more than 370 questionnaires were distributed to students and graduates, and 341 questionnaires were given back. The participants had (Master: 319 and Ph.D.: 22) degrees in English translation. 341 students comprising 40 males and 301 females participated in this study. The participants were selected by convenience sampling from different major universities in Iran.

3.2   Instrumentation

The survey was done based on a quantitative research design using a questionnaire.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire *M.A. English Translation Curriculum Effectiveness* was originally designed to explore the views of the M.A. and Ph.D. translation students and graduates about the effectiveness of the M.A. English translation curriculum in Iranian universities and to find out what courses are most needed in the curriculum to make it compatible with students' demands. The questionnaire consists of three main constructs, which best explains the M.A. English translation curriculum in Iranian universities namely courses offered in the master of translation, instructional objectives, and recommended courses. To obtain the necessary data for developing the first construct of the questionnaire entitled *Courses List*, the present researchers examined the current M.A. English translation curriculum in Iran. As Table 1 shows, the curriculum for M.A. in Iran consists of 26 courses (12 required and 14 elective courses). The required courses are obligatory courses for all M.A. translation students. Elective courses are chosen by the student from several optional courses in a curriculum. Elective courses when added to required courses, make up the total number of units needed to complete the degree. In this regard, each course title was considered as one item. According to the titles of the classified courses in the M.A translation curriculum at Iranian Universities, a 26-item was developed. Thus, the first construct of the questionnaire consists of 26 items.

Table 1: Classification of courses in the M.A. translation curriculum

	Course Titles	
	Required courses	**Elective courses**
1	Persian literature in the world literature	Writing a research paper
2	Translation advanced research methodology	Language teaching methods
3	Applied linguistics and translation	Socio-cultural studies in translation
4	Theories of translation	History of translation in Iran
5	Translation models	Discourse analysis and literature
6	Translation criticism	Translation of scientific texts
7	Advanced evaluation and translation	Introduction to principles of computer in translation
8	Translation seminar	Translation and culture
9	Translation workshop	Contrastive stylistic in translation
10	Literary criticism	Analysis of translation of literary masterpieces
11	Translation equivalence and lexicology	Translation from a linguistics perspective

12	Thesis	Analysis and translation of Islamic text
13	----	The theoretical foundation of translation
14	----	Philosophy of education

To obtain the required data to develop the second construct of the questionnaire entitled *Instructional Objectives*, the researcher surveyed the present curriculum for M.A. in English translation in Iran. As mentioned before, the Supreme Council of the Institute of Research and Planning in Higher Education in 1999 determined four instructional objectives for the existing M.A. English translation curriculum. The instructional objectives in the present curriculum are divided into four categories (a) training professional translators, (b) training M.A graduates in translatology, (c) training teachers of translation, and (d) training researchers in Translation Studies. Therefore, based on the purpose of the study, each instructional objective was considered as one item in the questionnaire (4 items). In this regard, the second construct of the questionnaire measured the students' conception of the effectiveness of four instructional objectives identified in the existing translation curriculum in Iranian universities.

The third construct of the questionnaire entitled *Recommended Courses* was used to find out what courses and subjects the students thought are most needed to be added to the curriculum and investigate their perspectives on the recommended courses for this level. To gain the essential data for designing the third construct of the questionnaire, the researcher examined the current M.A. English translation curriculum of several well-known and highly ranked universities in Asian countries such as the American University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), Ewha Womans University (South Korea), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (China), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), Notre Dame University (Lebanon), and Boğaziçi University (Turkey), International Islamic University Islamabad (Pakistan). According to 12 common and frequent courses offered in the curriculum of these seven universities which were not mentioned in the curriculum of Iran, a 12-item questionnaire was developed. Hence, 12 items were concerned with the students' agreement of incorporating the new courses into the translation curriculum (MA degree). Then, the questionnaire involved a total number of 42 items. The questionnaire was a Likert-type scale, consisting of five scales ranging from 1= Ineffective to 5= Very Effective. The questionnaire was piloted with 30 students to check whether the format and items of the questionnaire were clear to the participants. After piloting, the revised final copy of the questionnaire was administered. Moreover, its validity was confirmed through the Rasch model

WinSteps 3.73. The questionnaire has high reliability of 0.81 Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which indicated acceptable internal consistency.

3.3   Data analysis

The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Then, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage), and an independent samples t-test.

4.   Results

4.1   Students' Perspectives on Courses of M.A Curriculum

To answer the first research question, regarding the students' perspectives about the effectiveness of the required and elective courses offered in the M.A, the curriculum in Iranian universities, descriptive statistics were run. The results showed that 0.3% of students evaluated these courses as *Ineffective*, 2.9% as *Somewhat Effective*, 71.6% as *Moderately Effective*, and 25.2% evaluated them as *Effective* (Table 2).

Table 2: Students' perspectives regarding curriculum course list

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ineffective	1	.3	.3	.3
	Somewhat Effective	10	2.9	2.9	3.2
	Moderately Effective	244	71.6	71.6	74.8
	Effective	86	25.2	25.2	100.0
	Total	341	100.0	100.0	

To investigate which courses the students think were effective or ineffective, the percentage of the students' views of each course is presented in Table 3. The results showed that in the sample of 341 students, 62.5%, 46.3%, and 45.2% of students thought that the courses entitled *Philosophy of Education*, and *Literary Criticism*, *Language Teaching Methods* were ineffective, respectively.

Table 3: Students' perspectives regarding required and elective courses

Course titles		Very Effective	Effective	Moderately effective	Somewhat effective	Ineffective
		%	%	%	%	%
1	Persian literature in the world literature	2.1	12.6	14.7	30.2	40.5
2	Translation advanced research methodology	22.6	54.3	15.8	5.3	2.1
3	Applied linguistics and translation	7.6	27.3	35.5	23.2	6.5
4	Theories of translation	24.9	48.4	17.3	7	2.3
5	Translation models	17	43.1	28.4	8.8	2.6
6	Translation criticism	34.9	46	13.8	4.4	0.9

7	Advanced evaluation and translation	20.5	48.4	24	5.6	1.5
8	Translation seminar	29.9	46.6	15.8	5.6	2.1
9	Translation workshop	15.8	50.4	30.2	2.9	0.6
10	Literary criticism	2.9	11.7	11.4	27.6	46.3
11	Translation equivalence and lexicology	18.5	27.9	34.9	15.5	3.2
12	Thesis	29	45.2	15.8	6.5	3.5
13	Writing a research paper	29.6	41.6	19.9	6.5	2.3
14	Language teaching methods	2.3	5	10.6	37	45.2
15	Socio-cultural studies in translation	8.8	34	38.7	11.4	7
16	History of translation in Iran	2.1	9.7	23.5	36.1	28.7
17	Discourse analysis and literature	6.2	16.4	24.6	30.8	22
18	Translation of scientific texts	32.8	40.2	18.8	5.6	2.6
19	Introduction to principles of computer in translation	26.7	48.1	16.1	7	2.1
20	Translation and culture	20.8	33.7	30.2	11.1	4.1
21	Contrastive stylistic in translation	20.2	39.3/	22	12.3	6.2
22	Analysis of translation of literary masterpieces	6.2	13.8	29.6	36.1	14.4
23	Translation from linguistics perspective	1.5	22.6	35.5	29.6	10.9
24	Analysis and translation of Islamic text	12.3	39.9	27.6	16.4	3.8
25	The theoretical foundation of translation	17.3	43.1	27.9	9.7	2.1
26	Philosophy of education	0.6	0.6	5.6	30.8	62.5

Note. N=341, Mean=3.22, SD=0.49

4.2 Students' Perspectives on Instructional Objectives

To answer the second research question, regarding the translation students' perspectives about the effectiveness of the instructional objectives of the formal national English translation training curriculum implemented in Iran, descriptive statistics were used. As Table 4 shows, 1.8% of students evaluated the instructional objectives as *Ineffective*, 41.3% as *Somewhat Effective*, 54% as *Moderately Effective*, and 2.9% evaluated these objectives as *Effective*.

Table 4: Students' perspectives regarding instructional objectives

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Ineffective	6	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Somewhat Effective	141	41.3	41.3	43.1
	Moderately Effective	184	54.0	54.0	97.1
	Effective	10	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	341	100.0	100.0	

For example, as indicated in Table 5, 58.9% of translation students believed that the instructional objective entitled *Training Teachers of Translation* was ineffective. Besides, 38.4%

of the students evaluated the instructional objective entitled *Training Professional Translators* as somewhat effective. Additionally, 34.6% and 31.1% of students reported the instructional objectives entitled *Training Researchers in Translation Studies* and *Training M.A. Graduates in Translatology* were moderately effective.

Table 5: Students' perspectives regarding each instructional objectives

	Instructional Objectives	Very Effective	Effective	Moderately effective	Somewhat effective	Ineffective
		%	%	%	%	%
1	Training professional translators	4.7	7.9	19.1	38.4	29.9
2	Training M.A graduates in translatology	7	26.4	31.1	27.6	7.9
3	Training teachers in translation	4.4	7.9	7	21.7	58.9
4	Training researchers in Translation Studies	8.8	24.6	34.6	25.8	6.2

Note. N=341, Mean=2.58, SD=0.58

4.3 Students' Perspectives on Recommended Courses

To answer the third research question regarding the perspectives of students about the new recommended courses, descriptive statistics were computed. After investigating the students' perspectives on adding the recommended courses to the curriculum, the results reveal that 3.8% of students reported that the suggested courses are *Moderately Effective*, 61.6% believe that they are *Effective*, and 34.6% assume that they are *Very Effective*. For instance, as Table 6 shows, 67.7% of students stated that adding the course entitled *Translation of Technical Texts* to the curriculum would be *Very Effective*.

Table 6: Students' perspectives regarding each recommended course

	Recommended Courses	Very Effective	Effective	Moderately Effective	Somewhat Effective	Ineffective
		%	%	%	%	%
1	Theories and approaches in interpretation	46.3	43.4	5.3	2.9	2.1
2	Translation L1 to L2	54.3	41.1	2.9	0.9	0.9
3	Translation L2 to L1	46.3	44	6.5	2.1	1.2
4	Advanced Persian writing	30.5	45.5	19.9	3.2	0.9
5	Advanced English Writing	51.3	39	6.5	2.6	0.6
6	Sight translation	29.6	49	16.1	5	0.3
7	Interpretation workshop	61	32.6	5	0.9	0.6
8	Translation of Technical texts (advanced legal, political, etc.)	67.7	29	2.3	0.6	0.3
9	Visual media translation	38.7	49.3	11.4	0.6	0

10	Translation of subtitles	30.8	47.8	20.2	1.2	0
11	Bilingual editing skills	55.4	40.5	2.9	0.9	0.3
12	Marketing skills	32.3	50.7	14.1	2.1	0.9

Note. N=341, Mean=4.31, SD=0.5

4.4 Difference between M.A. and Ph.D. students' perspectives

To answer the fourth research question, regarding the difference between the perspectives of M.A. and Ph.D. translation students about the new recommended courses, an independent samples T-test was run. The independent t-test requires that the dependent variable is approximately normally distributed within each group. Hence, at the beginning of analyzing data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to measure the normality of data distribution. The obtained sig value was higher than .05 and the skewness was -.96, and the kurtosis was .93. In this regard, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. Besides, the results of the independent samples T-test (Table 7) showed that there was a significant difference between the perspectives of M.A. and Ph.D. students regarding the recommended courses, ($p = 0.00$).

Table 7: M.A. and Ph.D. students' perspectives regarding recommended courses

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			
		F	Sig	Sig. (2-tailed)	Upper
Recommended courses	Equal variances assumed	18.620	.000	.001	-.147
	Equal variances not assumed			.002	-.156

As Table 8 shows, M.A. and Ph.D. students have different perspectives about three out of the 12 recommended courses. The differences were related to *Persian Writing* (p= 0.00, PhD $_{Mean}$= 3.55, M.A. $_{Mean}$= 4.05), *English Writing* (p= 0.02, PhD $_{Mean}$= 3.73, M.A. $_{Mean}$= 4.42), and *Sight Translation* (p= 0.04, PhD $_{Mean}$= 3.59, M.A. $_{Mean}$= 4.06).

Table 8: Differences between M.A. and Ph.D. students' perspectives regarding recommended courses

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Theories and approach in Interpretation Equal variances assumed	.012	.912	.540
	Equal variances not assumed			.517
2	Translation L1 to L2 Equal variances assumed	19.257	.000	.041
	Equal variances not assumed			.269
3	Translation L2 to L1 Equal variances assumed	7.819	.005	.022
	Equal variances not assumed			.160
4	Advanced Persian Writing Equal variances assumed	2.776	.097	.007
	Equal variances not assumed			.026

5	Advanced English Writing	Equal variances assumed	46.984	.000	.000
		Equal variances not assumed			.026
6	Sight Translation	Equal variances assumed	4.145	.043	.010
		Equal variances not assumed			.045
7	Interpretation Workshop	Equal variances assumed	.197	.658	.861
		Equal variances not assumed			.843
8	Translation of technical Text	Equal variances assumed	.854	.356	.728
		Equal variances not assumed			.779
9	Visual media Translation	Equal variances assumed	1.422	.234	.289
		Equal variances not assumed			.176
10	Translation of Subtitles	Equal variances assumed	.086	.769	.043
		Equal variances not assumed			.076
11	Bilingual editing Skills	Equal variances assumed	3.166	.076	.083
		Equal variances not assumed			.162
12	Professional Ethics	Equal variances assumed	12.759	.000	.003
		Equal variances not assumed			.065

5.   Results and Discussion

The results revealed that 71.6% of students believed the present courses were moderately effective and few participants (25.2%) thought that the courses were effective in the translation program. Hence, it seems that the courses that curriculum designers developed for English translation were approved moderately effective from the students' perspectives. It showed that these courses were required; however, they were not effective enough. The results are somehow in line with Sharif's (2016) research findings. Her study showed that the courses offered at the master's level were appropriate from the students' points of view. Despite the moderate effectiveness of the courses, it was better to consider some courses in the curriculum. In general, Table 3 shows that most participants believe that some courses were not effective. It could be because those courses were less prominent for participants or not fully observed by respondents as effective courses in providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Also, the other reason is that some of these courses were designed as elective courses in the curriculum. Therefore, students might not study these elective courses during their studies and were unfamiliar with their titles and their objectives. Moreover, Marandi et al. (2013) stated that the curriculum should enable students to acquire a good command of the source and target language and train the graduates who are competent to translate texts. They believed more attention should be paid to translation practice. Sharif (2016) also stated that the course content should let the translation student reveal their real talent and skills in translation. In this regard, it seems that these ineffective courses do not let the students reveal their real abilities, skills, and talent in the field of translation. As a result, students believed that these courses were ineffective.

The other explanation is that there is an inconsistency between the course syllabus and course titles, which can lead to ineffective evaluation of the courses by the students. The results are in accordance with Heidarian's (2003) research findings. Heidarian (2003) found that one of the shortcomings of the curriculum is the inconsistency between the title of some courses and the syllabus. Furthermore, the result of the study is in accordance with Rahimy's (2010) findings. He believes that the vagueness of the syllabus and lack of specialization of instructors in teaching and motivating students to learn is the result of deficiencies in the courses present in the curriculum. For instance, almost half of the participants (46.3% and 45.2%) hold the view that the courses *Literary Criticism* and *Language Teaching Methods* were not effective enough to provide students with the necessary translation skills and competencies in the field of translation. Sharif (2016) also believed that the objectives and the content of the course entitled *Language Teaching Methods* were not based on the instructional objectives of the curriculum. In this regard, she concludes that the above-mentioned courses were not essential in the field of translator training and should be omitted from the curriculum. Besides, some of the students 48.4% evaluated the course *Theories of Translation* as effective. It is because the main objective of the M.A. curriculum is to train M.A graduates in Translatology and this theoretical course is designed to teach the theories, principles, and foundation of translation.

Moreover, according to the students' (48.1%) point of view, the course entitled *Introduction to Principles of Computer in Translation* was effective. In the same vein, Kenny and Doherty (2014, p. 226) in their study found that the responsibility of translator training institutes in an increasingly technologized industry is to help translation trainees use different computer-aided translation (CAT) tools such as translation memory systems. Translation training programs should offer courses in *Technology and Translation* to be admitted to the European Master's in Translation (EMT) Network.

Additionally, the results showed that in the sample of 341 students, 33.7% of students thought that the course entitled *Translation and culture* was ineffective. It revealed that the content of this course in the curriculum enhances students' theoretical knowledge of translation and culture. Attending to the cultural and social issues in translation and its relationship with culture and society are also among the topics that are covered in the content of courses offered in the curriculum of Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), and the American University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). For instance, the undergraduate translation program at Saudi University includes two

courses designated for enhancing the intercultural competence (IC) of translation students entitled *Readings in Language and Culture* and *Advanced Readings in Language and Culture* (Alenezi, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings showed that 54% of students believe the current instructional objectives of the M.A. English translation curriculum were moderately effective. It means that all objectives of the curriculum were moderately achieved at the end of this graduate level. The result of this study is in contrast with the result of Torbatinezhad (2014). She found that the students were not satisfied with the existing instructional objectives determined in the curriculum.

Besides, few students (68.3%) support the view that the curriculum of English translation at the M.A. level could not effectively train professional translators. The reason could be that enough practical and specialized translation courses were not designed in the curriculum. In this regard, the translation competencies, and skills in different areas of translation were not taught to students. As a result, it seems that students' translation competencies were not satisfactorily improved to become professional translators. Birjand and Nosratinia (2009) also asserted that the curriculum of English translation is inadequate in the training of professional translators.

Nearly half of the students (31.1%) thought that the objective of training M.A. graduates in Translatology was moderately achieved. It is because the number of theoretical courses in the curriculum is more than practical courses. Therefore, more time was spent on teaching and acquiring this knowledge. Thus, the capability and the knowledge of the students in this area were moderately improved.

In addition, a great number of students (58.9%) believe that the instructional objective entitled *Training Teachers of Translation* was not effectively achieved at the graduate level. The reason might be that no specific course and objective was designed in the curriculum to teach the method and the strategies of training teachers of translation. Furthermore, as mentioned above, one of the main objectives of the current M.A. translation program is to train researchers in Translation Studies. In the present study, less than half of the students (34.6%) shared the idea that the objective of *Training Researchers in Translation Studies* was moderately effectively achieved at this level. The reason might be that the content and objectives of some courses such as *Thesis*, *Writing Research Paper*, *Discourse Analysis and Literature*, and *Translation Advanced Research Methodology* are to teach M.A. students the research methods and skills in the field of translation.

The results revealed that the percentage of recommended courses was high which shows that the present recommended courses are essential and would be effective in a translation program from the students' perspectives. In addition, nearly all the students believed the university program lacked practical courses in interpretation and writing skills in English and Persian languages. This revealed that these courses are required to be added to the curriculum. In addition, the results also showed that almost all students agreed that the university courses are to familiarize students with the translation of some technical subjects such as *Visual Media Translation*, *Translation of Subtitles*, and *Sight Translation*. Additionally, the result of the independent samples t-test showed that the M.A students agreed more than the Ph.D. students add three recommended courses to the M.A. English translation curriculum including *Persian Writing*, *English Writing*, and *Sight Translation*. According to Pym (2010), one of the prerequisites to being a professional translator is to have writing skills and other translation competencies such as sight translation. The specialized course in writing would help students to improve their practical translation skills. Hence, M.A. translation students as fledgling translators in the area of translation and the ones who study at this level recognize the flaws and inadequacies in the curriculum and the skills and competencies they do not possess. In this regard, M.A. translation students think that to become professional translators they should develop their writing skills in both English and Persian languages. These skills may be developed by Ph.D. students because of the translation experiences they might gain after graduation as translators. Based on the results, by adding these courses there would be a new and improved syllabus and a more effective and practical curriculum. Khazaeefarid and Khoshsaligheh (2010), Mollanazar and Kamyab (2015), Salari and Khazaiefarid (2015), and Shahri et al. (2016) also asserted that technical writing, knowledge of information technology, writing the summary, and texts analysis are among the skills that current translators are suggested to be equipped with. Garnett (2012) proposed a list of employability translation skills that may differ based on national, cultural, and professional contexts such as self-management, planning and organization, communication, use of technology, lifelong learning, problem-solving, teamwork, and enterprise skills. Razmjou (2001) also suggested additional courses to be included in the curriculum of translator training like *Dubbing*, *Subtitling*, and *Sight Translation*. Torbatinezhad (2014) also found that most translation students have poor writing skills which have negative effects on their term translation activities. She also concluded that adding some courses such as

Subtitling, *Audio-visual Translation*, and *Interpretation Workshop* will prepare students for the professional market.

In this study, almost all the students hold the view that some practical courses such as *Interpretation Workshop*, *Translation of Technical Texts*, *Translation L1 to L2*, *Translation L2 to L1*, *Marketing Skills* and *Bilingual Editing Skills* should be added to the curriculum. In this regard, adding the above-mentioned courses can get the students ready to work as qualified translators in their future workplace. The results of this study are in line with Shahri et al.'s (2016) findings. They concluded that adding some courses including English and Persian reading and writing, translation of technical texts, editing skills, theories, and approaches to interpretation provide more chances for students to develop their competencies in the field of translation. Razmjou (2001), Khazaeefarid and Khoshsaligheh (2010), Molanazar and Kamyab (2015), and Salari and Khazaeefarid (2015) came to the same conclusion. They concluded that the present curriculum needs revision and it is required to add the missing skills such as *Technical Writing* and *Editing* courses to the curriculum. Besides, Gabr (2001) believed that by training students in technical translation, their terminology will improve and their subject-area competence will enhance. Jamalimanesh and Ghazizadeh, (2010) also found that translators should be equipped with skills in the translation of technical and specialized texts. In the same vein, Li (2007) stated that translators' ability to work under stress, hard-working, editing and management skills are important competencies of a qualified translator. Shahri et al. (2016) also in their studies found that translators' organization, discipline, marketing skills, talent for customer service, punctuality, and being able to meet deadlines were considered important required personality traits of a translator. Jamalimanesh and Ghazizadeh (2010) also stated that translators should be equipped with skills in marketing which should be achieved through the translator training program. In Mackenzie's view (2004), translation competence includes linguistic-cultural skills, interpersonal skills, IT skills, and marketing ability.

6.   Conclusion

Considering students' perspectives, the current curriculum was moderately effective in providing the students with the necessary knowledge and skills. The results indicated some courses including *Translation Workshop*, *Theories of Translation*, *Introduction to Principles of Computer in Translation*, and *Translation Advanced Research Methodology* were effective. It shows that these

courses are required to be taught at the master's level in Iran because they are more likely to develop students' knowledge and practical skills in the translation domain. Similarly, the course entitled *Theories of Translation* is among the courses offered in the curriculum of Ewha Womans University in South Korea. Besides, five Asian universities at the M.A. level such as the University of Hong Kong (China), Notre Dame Louaize (Lebanon), International Islamic University of Islamabad (Pakistan), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), and American University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) offered some courses in their program to introduce modern technologies in the field of translation. In addition, the course *Translation Advanced Research Methodology* with the purpose of teaching research knowledge and skills is among the courses offered in the curriculum of six Asian universities such as Boğaziçi (Turkey), the University of Hong Kong (China), American University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), Notre Dame Louaize (Lebanon), and International Islamic University of Islamabad (Pakistan). The results of the present study could help curriculum developers in other Asian universities to understand which courses adequately address the needs of potential translation students and enhance students' knowledge of theoretical principles of translation and translation competencies.

However, the results revealed that some courses such as *Literary Criticism*, *Language Teaching Methods*, *Philosophy of Education*, *History of Translation in Iran*, *Applied Linguistic and Translation*, *Persian Literature in the World Literature*, *Translation from the Linguistic Perspective,* and *Discourse analysis and literature* were not effective enough to improve students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills in translation. Hence, it seems that to enhance the graduates' chances of succeeding in the market, it is required to modify some course contents, update their materials and textbooks, or omit them from the current curriculum.

Students believed that the instructional objectives including *Training Teachers of Translation* and *Training Professional Translators* were not effectively achieved at the graduate level. It is because appropriate courses which legalized a student as a qualified translator or teachers of translation were not determined in the curriculum. Thus, it is required to update the curriculum and add some courses in accordance with these two instructional objectives.

Most of the participants support the view that it is required to improve students' skills as specialized translators in a practical and useful subject. In this regard, from their perspectives, some

practical courses in the specialized translation are necessary to be added to the curriculum such as *Bilingual Editing Skills*, *Advanced Writing Skills*, *Visual Media Translation*, *Subtitling*, *Sight Translation*, *Advanced Legal Translation*, *Advanced Translation of Political Texts*, and *Advanced Business and Economic Texts Translation,* etc. For example, based on the participants' perspectives, it is required to add a course such as *Visual Media Translation* to the curriculum to make students familiar with the skills needed in the translation market. Besides, some courses such as *Interpretation Workshop* and *Translation of Technical Texts* help to promote the practicality of the students and make them ready to work as qualified translators in the real workplace. Moreover, the results showed it is necessary to add some courses on teaching translation skills in English and Persian language to improve students' translation skills in both languages. Based on students' point of view one of the curriculum shortcomings is the lack of courses in marketing skills to teach students the skills they might need after graduation in the translation market. In this regard, Abelha et al. (2020) declared that it is needed for higher education institutions to meet the needs of the labor market. Rodríguez de Céspedes (2017, p. 107) asserted that a lot of efforts were made to narrow the gap between translator training programs and employers' expectations. Abelha et al. (2020) said that the concept of employability should be included in translator training programs. "Employability could be enhanced by incorporating work experience in the curriculum, by building an institutional culture that promotes employability, and by inviting employers as guest lecturers" (Abelha et al., 2020, p. 10). Thus, based on the study's findings, it is required to add the course *Marketing Skills* to the curriculum.

To update the current curriculum for M.A. English translation in Iranian universities, a list of courses and instructional objectives are proposed. By adding these courses there would be a new and improved syllabus and a more effective and practical curriculum. The suggested instructional objectives are as follows:

- Enhancing students' theoretical knowledge of translation and interpreting studies
- Enhancing students' practical translation skills and competencies in English and Persian language
- Enhancing students' skills in interpretation skills in the English and Persian language
- Enhancing students' professional skills and knowledge of Persian and English languages

- Enhancing students' professional skills and knowledge in the translation of various technical texts, such as law texts, political texts, business texts, etc.

Consequently, a list of courses is proposed to the decision-makers or the curriculum developers in Iran or other countries to include them in the curriculum of M.A Translation to enhance graduates' chances of succeeding in the present translation industry. These courses include:

- Courses in advanced writing in the source language (English language)
- Courses in advanced writing in the target language (Persian Language)
- Courses in advanced specialized translation, especially in topics like sight translation, subtitling, visual media translation, political text, business text translation, etc.
- Courses in interpretation
- Courses in advanced bilingual editing skills
- Courses in marketing skills
- Courses in translation teaching methods

Based on the results of the present study and related literature reviews, the researchers propose some courses and instructional objectives which are required to be added and used in the curriculum of English Translation in Iran or other countries to enhance graduates' chances of succeeding in the present translation industry. Hence, the results of this study can be useful for translation students and graduates to get familiar with the knowledge and competencies required to get a job after graduation as a skillful translator. The results also can help translation instructors to understand which courses and objectives are effective to improve students' theoretical knowledge and practical translation competencies. Additionally, the results provide novel information for curriculum developers in Iran or other countries to work on updating or designing the curriculum of translation by adding effective courses and instructional objectives.

As does all research, this study suffered from delimitations that could be addressed by future studies. Indeed, because of the wide scope of the study's topic and the limited resources available to conduct it, the study excluded the teachers' factors; institutional factors; employer's factors; teaching methods; teaching and learning process; teaching-learning activities, teaching materials and references; choosing and sequencing of course content; choosing and arranging of

learning experiences and activities; and also, evaluation procedures. Additionally, social factors, cultural factors, and instructors' methods of teaching were not investigated in the present research. Hence, it is recommended that future studies should evaluate the social and cultural factors to discover more information about the effectiveness of the M.A. curriculum in Iranian universities. In addition, the translation instructors' perspectives or employers' views were excluded from the study. Moreover, another study can be carried out to investigate the perspectives of translation instructors and students in other Asian universities regarding the effectiveness of their own universities' curricula and compare their perspectives with Iranian students and instructors. Furthermore, another study could explore the effectiveness of learning materials and textbooks currently used at the M.A. level. Other research can use some tests such as achievement tests to evaluate the real translation competence of M.A. students and graduates and find out how effective the practical and theoretical courses are to improve students' translation competencies.

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