

# Ideology in Syllabus: The Revised B.A. English Translation Programme at Iranian Universities

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## Abstract

*In 2018, the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology introduced its B.A. Revised English Translation Programme (RETP). This article reviews the revised curriculum drawing upon concepts such as 'ideology' and 'centralizing political systems'. Analyzing the components of the document, it is argued that the syllabus is the result of ideologically-motivated political factors shaped in post-revolutionary Iran to consolidate the hegemony and ideology of an emerging state. This appears to be a unique case in Translation Studies and translation historiography, in particular as far as the role of socio-political ideology in translation pedagogy is concerned. Findings suggest that there remains a large number of ideologically-motivated courses in the curriculum that are of neither theoretical nor practical uses in translating/interpreting. Drawing on the current trends in Translation Studies, a set of alternative courses is proposed.*

**Keywords:** RETP, Curriculum, Ideology, Centralizing Political System, Courses.

## 1. Introduction

Syllabus design, curriculum development and their interrelationships with the real needs of the learners are of utmost importance in educational planning. In quality assessment of any educational programme too, syllabus design and curriculum development are required to be rigorously taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, from a pedagogical point of view a syllabus/curriculum designed for undergraduate students of translation/interpreting is expected to be realistic in its orientation, in particular with respect to the skills or competences to be developed in the target student

population. Such a document could hardly be efficient for that purpose unless all its interconnected components serve that goal.

Among the issues of prime importance in any educational planning, one is the conceptualization of syllabus/curriculum. Researchers and educators have for a long time been debating on different theoretical as well as practical aspects of the issue (Colina & Venuti 2017; Block 2004; Hasanpour 1991; Shohamy 2006; Watson 2012). What objectives to set up or follow, and what content to incorporate or avoid incorporating into a curriculum, have also been of significant importance in the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational courses. As far as translation/interpreting pedagogy is concerned, many researchers in Translation Studies have scrutinized different aspects of syllabi/curricula in terms of approaches, methods, as well as their other constituents.

For example, Gile (1992, 1995, 200), Kirally (1995, 2000) and Venuti (2017) addressed the basic theoretical concepts for interpreter and translator training as well as the major models for interpreter and translator training. Gonzalez Davies (2004) concentrated on how to deal with multiple voices in translation classroom. An exhaustive bibliography of publications on translator and interpreter training, issues in curriculum renewal in terms of vocational challenges in addition to a number of critical debates were studied by Kearns (2006, 2007, 2008). As did Nord (2018) in discussing translating as a purposeful type of activity. The concept of method in translation was also pinpointed from a historical perspective by Pym (1998). Similarly, Tymoczko (2007) recommended ways to empower translators. In another line of research, Pochhacker (1999, 2015, 2016) made seminal contributions to the study of issues concerned with interpreting (both simultaneous and consecutive), e.g. methodological approaches, present and

future trends in interpreting studies as well as giving a comprehensive overview of the field. To Kelly (2005), at undergraduate level with students normally younger and with less prior knowledge, less experience in general “they will require development of a range of generic competences... with little or no attention being paid to issues such as the cultural and ideological implications of translation” (p. 62). A relevant statement by Kearns (2012) is also quoted by Kelly and Martin (2020) arguing that” programme structures reflect the curricular ideologies behind their design, and that many of these ideologies are implicit and unspoken (a hidden curriculum), originating in local, national, regional, professional, and academic which often go unquestioned”(p. 594). What Nation and Macalister (2010: 70) highlighted for deciding and checking the content and sequencing of a course includes guidelines such as the following:

1. The course content should take account of what learners expect to see in an English course
2. The course should increase the acceptability and usefulness of the course
3. The course content should suit the proficiency level of the learners
4. The course content should take account of what the learners want
5. The course content should be what learners need

## **2. Translation Pedagogy at Iranian Universities: An Overview**

In late-1980s, Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, introduced its undergraduate English Translation Programme (henceforth, ETP) which was in use until 2017. In 2018 however, ETP was substituted by a more recent version, the Revised English Translation Programme (henceforth, RETP), which has been in use as the basis for English

translation pedagogy across Iranian universities since then. Both versions are predominantly ideologically-motivated (Shia Islam indoctrination permeating the syllabus) in terms of their overall educational objectives as well as their course contents. Given the fact that during the past 34 years, this component of both versions has remained intact, and because during this long duration tens of thousands of Iranian undergraduate students of both ETP and RETP have been affected by such an approach in translation pedagogy, this research intends to further promote scholarship on the issue. It is in fact postulated here that both ETP and RETP are in essence ‘frame curricula’ shaped after a turbulent post-revolutionary context in Iran in the early 1980s; a period characterized by the attempts of the centralizing forces of the emerging revolutionary regime that had adopted an ideologically-motivated educational policy (an overtly Shia Islamic approach) to achieve its political as well as cultural hegemony. By ‘ideology’ in a ‘curriculum’, we subscribe to Apple (2019) to the effect that being the product of such a period, both ETP and RETP represent a frame curriculum suffering from drawbacks, some chronically left intact since 1980s adversely affecting the overall efficacy of the programme. To the best knowledge of this researcher, this is a fact not addressed in the relevant literature so far; a research gap hoped to be filled to contribute to the improvement of English translation pedagogy across Iranian universities. To prove this, the relevant components in the RETP will be subjected to a detailed analysis in the following sections of the paper.

### **3. Literature Review**

During more than three decades of the implementation of ETP in Iranian universities, it was subjected to a wide array of critical analyses by relevant professional researchers (Davari et al. 2021-2022; Ebraahimi 2010; Haajibaabaei 2010; Kaamyab 2010; Khoshsaligheh 2013; Khoshsaligheh et al.

2019; Mirzaebraahim Tehraani 2002; Mollanazar 2002; Nasre Esfahaani 2010; Nasrollahi Shahri et al. 2016; Saalaari & Khazaaefarid 2014). Davari et al. (2012-2022) attempted to study and evaluate the programme through the attitudes of ten faculty members from seven universities across Iran. It was found that in their opinions despite some merits in RETP, it still suffers from some weaknesses with regard to some courses, their syllabi, the proposed sources and their prerequisites. Ebraahimi (2010) believed that ETP was inspired by the objectives of the curricula of the B.A. English Language and Literature as well as Teaching English as a Foreign Language; thus in need of revisions, updating, specialization, and recruiting professional translators in courses. To Haajibaabaaee (2010), ETP was far from educating skilled manpower necessary for the graduates of such a market-driven programme. For Kaamyab (2010), ETP lacked essential courses such as textology, teaching translation of scientific as well as engineering texts, translation marketing, literacy in using monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, and practical English literature. Another researcher (Khoshsaligheh 2013), used the findings of a survey responded to by a number of instructors of the Programme, to call for incorporation of courses such as translation-apps, market-related issues in translation, and translation quality assessment. The alleged failure of ETP was attributed by Mirzaebraahim Tehraani (2002) to concurrent teaching of English language, literature, and translation, inclusion of Persian-English translation, unqualified instructors, inappropriate text-types selected for translation, and lack of coordination among instructors in translation teaching methodology. Another researcher (Mollanazar 2002) criticized the designers of the Programme for confusing the objectives of other English majors with those of the B.A. English Translation Programme. Nasre Esfahaani (2010) too criticized it mainly for ignoring the new developments in translation pedagogy. As for Narollahi Shahri

et al. (2016), the Programme was evaluated to be suffering from two drawbacks: lack of relevant courses in information technology, and of computer-assisted translation courses. Still for Saalaari & Khazaaefarid (2014) what ETP overlooked was a total disregard for the Iranian relevant market needs. Khoshsaligheh et al. (2019) did their investigation to understand whether in both EPT and RETP, the needs and wants of trainees correspond to either of the two curricula. Focus group interviews, literature review and a questionnaire revealed that the courses related to translation practice were ranked as the most important component by the trainees.

Nevertheless, none of the research articles cited above has referred to the role of another variable which appears to have been the main factor in the inefficacy of both ETP and RETP; state ideology permeating the syllabus. It is hoped that the study would contribute to the enhancement of the efficacy of RETP with hundreds of thousands of Iranian clients affected, and help avoid any further waste of energy, capital, as well as human resources.

On the other hand, in any case of curriculum reform, a number of agents with different roles need to be taken into consideration. According to Medgyes & Nikolov (2010: 265), these include

1. Policymakers, who take the major decisions (politicians, ministry officials, deans, heads of departments)
2. Specialists, who provide the necessary resources (curriculum and syllabus designers, materials writers, methodologists, teacher trainers)
3. Teachers, who deliver the services
4. Students, who receive the services
5. Mediators, who liaise among all the participants (government agencies, such as the British Council, the United States Information Agency, and the Goethe Institute, or non-governmental organizations, such as the Soros Foundation).

Clearly, any mismatch and/or clash between/among the above factors would end up in deterioration, disintegration and final failure of an educational programme. On the other hand, no educational plan or program can be conceived of as being designed or implemented in vacuum; programmes are shaped and implemented in specific social, economic, political, and cultural contexts (Apple 2013; Apple et al. 2018; Hayati & Mashhadi 2010). Furthermore, ‘a curriculum cannot be expected to work merely by legislative, decree, white papers, and centrally-issued directives’ (Skilbeck 1994; cited in Medgyes & Nikolov 2010: 267). Moreover, educational plans and programmes intended for large-scale national or regional purposes tend to be based on a specific educational philosophy, i.e. a type of “ideology” which presupposes a particular set of the characteristics in its prospective learners to whom a set of values, habits, and customs are to be transferred (Apple 2019: xlii). According to Apple “our educational institutions do function to distribute ideological values and knowledge, though this is not all they do. As a system of institutions, they also ultimately help produce the type of knowledge (as a type of commodity) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and educational arrangements that now exist” (2019: xxii). Accordingly, curricula thus produced are expected to serve consolidate hegemony, particularly so under authoritarian political systems.

It is evident that in drawing up an educational programme/curriculum, its implementation, and in evaluating its success or failure at national level, political agents (government/state, political parties, interest groups, etc.) do play their roles. It is in the “interface” among all these factors where a curriculum is shaped, with decisions being made by both political decision-makers and education specialists. The decisions thus made would directly affect the teaching/learning

processes in classrooms. Naturally, an educational programme drawn up by a politically- centralizing system would not be the same as a programme prepared by a non- centralizing political system because in politically-centralizing systems curricula tend to be ‘frame curricula’ (Medgyes & Nikolov 2010: 271). Frame curricula are resistant to critical feedback and curb administrative or professional call for autonomy.

#### **4. Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to motivate the present study:

1. To what extent is Revised English Translation Programme ideologically-motivated?
2. What courses in Revised English Translation Programme are pedagogically irrelevant and overweight?
3. For what reason/s were these courses incorporated into Revised English Translation Programme?
4. What alternative courses could be recommended instead?

#### **5. Methodology**

To find answers to the research questions, in the following different aspects and components of both ETP and RETP are subjected to a detailed document analysis by comparing and contrasting their components. The analysis is intended to reveal if a number of the courses could pedagogically be considered as overweight, irrelevant, and ideologically-motivated. Meanwhile, what reasons are behind drawing up such an educational programme; and incorporation of what alternative courses may serve to offset its perceived drawbacks? The potential answers to the questions appear to be of utmost importance in the study as the document itself asserts” during these years, the conceptualization of a translator /interpreter as well as the social expectations of them have dramatically changed, so have the social settings and market needs. Thus, translators/interpreters are expected to be



well-versed in translating a long array of written, oral, audiovisual, and multimodal materials, to be literate in the relevant computer-assisted translation technology, in addition to being competent in using language skills and proficient in communicative competence” (Aahanchiyaan 2018: 3). In case the potential causes of the drawbacks are assumed to be related to other factors, attempts are to be made to trace them to get to the root cause/s.

## **6. Data Analysis**

In the “introduction” section of RETP, four aims are introduced as the “objectives” of the whole syllabus (p. 1); all concentrating solely on translation-related issues:

- a. Improving the four English language skills, Persian writing, and editing
- b. Improving translation-related competence/performance
- c. Improving skills in translating from English into Persian and vice versa (in written translation, interpreting, and audio-visual translation)
- d. Improving knowledge and skills in using translation-related technology in translation market

Thus, none of the objectives have anything to do with “irrelevant” aims or objectives different from translation major (e.g. EFL/ESL skills, ideological courses dealing with religio-political courses, French courses, etc.).

On the other hand, in RETP, the list of all the 136 credits of the B.A. curriculum is cataloged as: Mandatory General Courses (22 credits), Basic Courses (22 credits), Specialized Courses (82 credits), and Elective Courses (10 credits) (Aahanchiyaan 2018). Given the explicit dual objectives of RETP (‘improving the four English language skills, Persian expertise in writing/editing, besides boosting translation-

related skills, i.e. principles of translating, translating from English into Persian and vice versa in written, oral, and audio-visual cases), our yardstick is whether or not the course contents can be ‘relevant/irrelevant’ to the real needs of the undergraduate students of Translation/interpreting in Iran today.

### **6.1 Incorporation of New Relevant Courses**

The new useful specialized courses incorporated into RETP ( rightly added to comply with the dual objectives specified in the Curriculum) include: Public Speech, Technology in Translation, Translating English Texts in Humanities, Translating Persian Texts in Humanities, Consecutive Interpreting, Simultaneous Interpreting, Editing Persian Texts, Translation Market, New Translation Research Areas, Internship in Translating/Interpreting, Translating Scientific & Specialized Texts (each with a 2 credits weight). However, this does not imply that all of these courses were absent in the previous programme; some have been merely renamed, e.g. Consecutive Interpreting and Simultaneous Interpreting were among the courses of the previous programme but with an umbrella designation ‘Oral Translation’ (3 separate courses, each for 2 credits), or ‘Internship in Translating/Interpreting’ and ‘Annotated Translation’ used to be among the courses included in the previous program under a different course title ‘Independent Translation’ with the same course description (2 separate courses, each for 2 credits).

### **6.2 Detrimental Reduction in Relevant Basic Courses**

In contravention of the explicit dual objectives of the RETP mentioned in section 5 above, in one case the numerical weight of the Basic Courses (Reading English Texts, English Grammar, and English Conversations) has dramatically reduced from 24 credits (8 credits for each course) to 12. This detrimental reduction would logically result in more flawed

‘competence’ and ‘performance’ of the undergraduate students of RETP.

### **6.3 Keeping Irrelevant ESL/EFL Courses Intact**

In contravention of the relevant objectives specified in RETP, three ESL/EFL Courses with no relevance to improving the ‘competence’ and/or ‘performance’ of the students of the English Translation Programme, are left intact in this revised version: English Language Teaching Methodology, Teaching English Language Skills, Testing English (2 credits each). These three specialized courses in fact belong to ESL/EFL major students, and are not among the courses assumed to contribute to English-Persian translation qualifications of the students.

### **6.4 Keeping Irrelevant Elective Courses Intact**

Among the features of the RETP, are 5 ‘Language Two’ Elective Courses (2 credits each). As a routine in Iranian universities, the Language Two for all English major students is French. This is counterproductive because first of all for no Iranian (irrespective of their mother tongues and/or regional dialects) French could be considered as their second language. French can be either their third language or even the fourth (e.g. for those whose mother tongues are Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Baluchi, etc.). Secondly, no academic scholarly source has ever claimed that successful translation/interpretation from English into Persian, or vice versa, depends on being competent or proficient in French.

### **6.5 Keeping Irrelevant Mandatory General Courses Intact**

The largest number of professionally irrelevant courses of RETP falls into this category. They consist of 12 Mandatory General Courses (22 credits) of no relevance to the explicit dual objectives of the Programme, particularly so because they are invariably offered in Persian language only: Theoretical

Principles of Islam I & II (2 credits each), Islamic Ethics (2 credits), Islamic Revolution of Iran (2 credits), Islamic Culture & Civilization (2 credits), Introducing Islamic ideological Sources (2 credits), Imam Khomeini’s Socio-political Perspectives (2 credits), History of Islamic Leadership (2 credits), Persian Literature (3 credits), Physical Education I & II (2 credits each), and Family Planning (1 credit). It is evident that these course titles have no connections at all with the required cross-lingual translation and/or interpretation qualifications in any way.

Table: *Classification of Courses in RETP (as perceived in this research)*

| Total Number of Credits of the B.A. English Translation Programme | Irrelevant Courses Per Credit |                 |                  | Reduced Basic Courses Per Credit | Total Irrelevant Courses Per Credit | Total Courses Counterproductively Affected Per Credit |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 136   | Mandatory General Courses     | ESL/EFL Courses | Elective Courses | 12                               | 38                                  | 50  |
|   | 22                            | 6               | 10               |                                  |                                     |   |

## 7. Discussion

Given the explicit dual objectives of RETP, a glance at 6.2 through 6.5 above would reveal that the document at its present configuration faces a number of challenges; as many as 12 credits of crucial Basic Courses are omitted from the

curriculum; 6 irrelevant ESL/EFL credits are still there in the syllabus. On the other hand, 22 Mandatory General Courses are professionally irrelevant; in addition to 10 irrelevant Language Two courses left intact in RETP. Now, if the main objective of the undergraduate courses is admitted to be empowering the students in terms of market-oriented skills and/or qualifications, it would not be difficult to concede how counterproductive it would be to have 38 irrelevant credits (in addition to the omission of 12 Basic Courses) in a curriculum to adversely affect its educational efficacy. Statistically, a total of 50 professionally irrelevant credits in a curriculum of 136 credits would equal to well over 27% of the whole curriculum content; an overweight number of courses disrupting the optimal balance required to be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the overall contents of the courses in a curriculum.

Seen from another perspective, for a curriculum at a national level to be regarded as authoritative, it is expected to be based either on a well-established model or paradigm, or on an alternative, new approach sufficiently persuasive to the insiders. The integration of 22 totally irrelevant ideological courses, does not match any of the 47 translation and 35 interpreting curriculum models in Oraki & Tajvidi (2020). Nor does this ‘innovation’ appears to be in line with the perspectives in curriculum development and translation pedagogy, as represented in relevant sources (e.g. Gile 1992, 1995; Pym 1998; Robinson 2012; Kearns 2008; Venuti 2017, to name a few). RETP, on the other hand, claims to have been designed based on principles such as “updating, optimizing, domesticating, and *Islamizing* university curricula” (Aahanchiyaan 2018: 3) [italics mine]; however, it fails to indicate which of the current models in translation pedagogy it subscribes to for this objective, or if it does intend to offer an alternative component in the curriculum, what educational

rationale could be delineated for inclusion of Mandatory Islamic irrelevant courses in the document.

But what are the real reasons for implementing such a counterproductive curriculum? Hardly anybody would deny that reducing the numerical weight of the Basic Courses from 24 to 12 can be anything but counterproductive educationally, because practically no one can become a successful translator unless one's competence as well as performance in such Basic Courses is optimally enhanced; a fact ignored in RETP. The same is true of retaining the irrelevant ESL/EFL Courses in the curriculum (6.3, above); 6 credits with no justifications in any translation-related programme, and contravening the main objectives of the whole programme. As far as retaining the 22 credits known as Mandatory General Courses is concerned, their ubiquity in both the previous version of the curriculum and its latest version, may only be interpreted as a package of irrelevant ideologically-motivated courses which are made mandatory for every Iranian undergraduate student. Therefore, their presence in RETP is both theoretically and practically inconsistent with the overall objectives of the curriculum, and has not been demonstrated to contribute to the enhancement of the competence and/or performance of the students of the English Translation Programme in Iran in any way.

### **7.1 Curriculum as an Ideological Tool Serving Hegemony and Social Control**

Curricula are not designed in vacuum; a curriculum, whether at micro-level or macro-level, is drawn up in specific social, economic, cultural, and political contexts. At national level, the specific circumstances dictate their presence through regulations, statutes, bylaws, etc. approved and put into effect by institutional powers. This is not inconceivable or surprising to see the governments that control the educational systems in their countries, seeking to propagate some sort of their own

favorite discourse, ideology, and particular ideals. This seems to be echoed in Apple's view who maintains that "our educational institutions do function to distribute ideological values and knowledge, though this is not all they do. As a system of institutions, they also ultimately help produce the type of knowledge (as a kind of commodity) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and cultural arrangements that now exist" (2019: xxii).

As far as the presence of the largest number of the irrelevant courses in RETP (Mandatory General Courses with 22 credits) is concerned, this package of ideologically-motivated courses was initially interposed in the curricula of all undergraduate programmes at Iranian universities in the early 1980s after a turbulent period of socio-political unrest spreading across the country. During that time, only a few months after the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1978, universities were closed down for two years in the wake of a series of fierce clashes between rival students' populations and factions, leaving behind many dead and wounded, to shape a historical event in post-revolutionary Iran, known as the Cultural Revolution of 1980. The event was characterized by the clashes between members of the leftist student unions (active against the policies of the newly-emerged Islamist political leaders of the country), and the radical Islamist students who supported the revolutionary Muslim leaders in power. On reopening of the universities after two years, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989) set up the Cultural Revolution Higher Council (henceforth, CRHC) to 'Islamize the atmosphere of the universities to make fundamental changes in the educational curricula to help universities serve the nation, not the West' (Khomeini 1981). This marked the outright intention of the state to legitimize its hegemony. Thereafter, the policy-making for the Iranian university affairs witnessed a dramatic change, with the monopolistic

management and authority of the Ministry of Higher Education being transferred to the newly-founded CRHC. The body vested with full-fledged legislative power to run all the affairs of the Iranian universities consisted of 30 members (Islamist religious, revolutionary leaders loyal to the Supreme Leader) among whom Minister of Higher Education was only one. CRHC's decisions were, and still are, binding for the Ministry of Higher Education. As such, CRHC started to function as a 'hegemonic bloc', to borrow the term from Apple (2019: xvii), with the hegemonic ideological aims already clarified to them by the Leader Ayatollah Khomeini as to the Islamization of the Iranian higher education system. Among its first rules and regulations officially announced to be put into effect by all universities for all undergraduate courses was a package of 22 credits of Mandatory General (Islamic) Courses that were incorporated into all curricula, and have been left intact since 1981. Clearly, since the package is authorized by a body whose policies are binding and irrevocable, no attempt has ever been made to either nullify or modify the policy in order to contribute to the enhancement of the efficacy of the curriculum.

It is now evident that the aim of the law-makers to incorporate a large number of professionally irrelevant ideologically-motivated courses in RETP was to use curriculum as a tool for social control and distribution of ideological values to counter non-Islamic ideologies which are believed by the ruling establishment in Iran to be detrimental to the Islamic identity of the university students in the Islamic Republic of Iran. To Golkar (2012), Islamization of universities in post-revolutionary Iran was a case of 'cultural engineering under authoritarian regimes' (p. 1). This was an educational policy reminiscent of Evangelical Christian policies in the USA referred to by Apple (2001) where 'the growing influence of authoritarian, populist religious conservatism in education' (p.



27) did everything possible to bring God back into schools. To the anti-Western religious leaders of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the universities' secular curricula were required to comply with the Islamic teachings by courses intended for such a purpose. From their perspective, the course contents of the curricula had to be legitimized by a clear relationship with the Holy Quran and other Islamic canonical, orthodox sources. This again is a fact reminiscent of the situation in the US as portrayed by Apple (1998), underscoring 'the formation of a new hegemonic bloc that is pushing education in particular 'rightward' direction' (p. 181).

However, adopting such an approach has been an outright violation of the dual explicit objectives of RETP, with no hope of any future realization of the optimal efficacy of the curriculum at national level. To account for the root cause of the current deficiencies in RETP, the reason appears to be found in the nature of the curriculum which is an ideologically-motivated curriculum intended partly to legitimize the power by propagating a kind of ideological commodity wrapped up by the ruling establishment. This particular type of curriculum is not designed by the specialized department or organization responsible for such tasks (e.g. Educational Planning Bureau of the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology), because the two relevant bodies are not autonomous but subordinate to the rules and regulations passed and authorized by the CRHC. Accordingly, it is safe to claim that RETP is in a way a product of the interactions and decisions made in the interface between two political and educational institutes (CRHC vs. the Ministry); a situation reminiscent of the one conceptualized by Medgyes & Nikolov (2010: 265). This is, in fact, a characteristic feature of politically-centralizing systems (authoritarian regimes) in which macro-decisions are already made by superordinate institutes, and subordinate organizational components are

required only to put plans into practice, with no allowance for specialized professionally educational autonomy.

## **7.2 Recommended Alternative Courses**

Now, appreciating the incorporation of the new relevant courses into RETP explained in 6.1, we offer our recommended alternative courses believed to comply with the explicit dual objectives of the syllabus, within the same overall 136 number of credits allocated before.

### **7.2.1 Reincorporation of the Deleted Basic Courses**

Given the unquestionable role of the Basic Courses (English Conversations I & II, Reading English Texts I & II, and English Grammar I & II) in enhancing the competence and performance of the undergraduate students of RETP, it is recommended to reincorporate those deleted essentially necessary courses into RETP in order to increase their credits from 6 to 12; thus making provisions for developing more enhanced translation-related competence and/or performance of the students.

### **7.2.2 Omission of Irrelevant ESL/EFL Courses and Replacing them with Relevant Specialized Courses**

As argued in 5.3 above, the 3 irrelevant ESL/EFL Courses (6 credits) have no role in enhancing the competence and performance of the students of RETP as far as translation from/into English is concerned; it is recommended instead to select 3 relevant courses of utmost importance to students of English-Persian translation today. For instance, given the prevailing popularity of audio-visual materials, and the unfortunate shortage of such relevant courses in RETP (only a 2-credit course), it is recommended to increase the credit number of audio-visual courses from 2 to 8, thus incorporating 4 audio-visual courses instead of 1. This would no doubt contribute to the competence as well as the performance of the

clients of RETP.

### **7.2.3 Omission of Irrelevant “L2 Language” Elective Courses**

Given the arguments and explanations in 6.4, leaving the 10-credit courses known as ‘L2 Language’ (routinely, French) intact in the current RETP is against any scholarly educational rationale. Therefore, it is recommended to omit this category of courses altogether to avoid any further waste of energy, time, human as well as financial resources. Even if there is any insistence on keeping the course titles in the current curriculum, it is suggested to logically turn to the L2 Language with which Persian has had the deepest historical linguistic connections so far, and maintained the most extensive relationships throughout history; i.e. Arabic language. In fact, in translating English into Persian and vice versa, Arabic plays a crucial part simply because Persian language has historically been reliant on Arabic vocabulary, grammar, and even rhetorical devices.

### **7.2.4 Omission of Irrelevant Mandatory General Courses and Replacing them with Relevant Courses**

The biggest problem with RETP is found here with 22 credits of Mandatory General Courses, with no role in improving translation-related competence or performance of the students either in translating from English into Persian or vice versa. The complete course titles of this category of courses (12 courses) were listed in 6.5 above. To offset the drawbacks of this section of the curriculum, the two following alternatives (7.2.4.A & 7.2.4.B) are suggested:

#### **7.2.4. A. Retaining all Irrelevant Mandatory General Courses but Offering them in English**

According to this recommended choice, all the irrelevant Mandatory General Courses could be left intact in RETP, but

offered in English to help students gain more reliable translation-related competence and/or performance. This is believed to be more productive and in accordance with the dual objectives of RETP, to be complemented by development of the relevant textbooks.

#### **7.2.4. B. Substitution of Irrelevant Mandatory General Courses with Relevant Courses**

According to this recommended choice, firstly, the omitted 12-credit Basic Courses (6.2, above) are reintroduced into the curriculum, secondly, the 6-credit ESL/EFL Courses (6.3, above) are omitted to be substituted by relevant translation courses, and finally, 22 credits of relevant translation-related courses are incorporated into RETP to enrich the curriculum in a purposeful way. These revisions are deemed necessary because of the following reasons:

1. No imminent threats are visible to endanger the perceived religious and/or political identity of Iran's students' population.
2. A sufficient number of 8 "Islamic" courses are already embedded in RETP.
3. A proportionate number of 10 credits of Persian Language and Literature are also among the courses in RETP, to further guarantee that the curriculum sufficiently complies with the cultural norms of the country.
4. The explicit dual objectives of RETP are now aptly taken into consideration, in particular with respect to the necessity of improving the translation-related skills and qualifications in the students.

In case the above arguments and rationale are found satisfactorily persuasive, then a collection of 22 relevant courses are recommended to be introduced into the curriculum to empower the efficacy of RETP:

*Translating Medical Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Translating Engineering Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Translating Mathematical Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Translating Drama Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Translating Sports Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Translating Tourism- Commercial Texts and Discourse* (2 credits),  
*Team-Translating and Project Management* (2 credits),  
*Advanced Persian Writing* (2 credits), *Excerpts of Persian Prose and Poetry* (2 credits), *Introducing Western Civilization and Culture* (2 credits), and *Iranian Studies in Translation* (2 credits).

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to critically analyze the different components of RETP. This appears to be of significant importance because the document has affected every aspect of English translation pedagogy in Iran since 34 years ago, and is expected to do so until an unforeseeable future as a roadmap for the major stakeholders in the field. As a critical study, the research made use of concepts found in curriculum development and syllabus design to pinpoint both the merits and demerits of this revised curriculum. To this end, four research questions were formulated to help figure out which of the courses in RETP are irrelevant to its objectives, what reasons were behind their incorporation into the curriculum, whether or not the document was ideologically-motivated, and what alternative courses could be suggested to compensate for the perceived drawbacks and enhance its efficacy. Then, on analysis of the data it was found that although a few new relevant courses have been incorporated into this revised curriculum thought to be of value in enhancing the efficacy of the programme, a large number of educationally irrelevant courses are still there: 22 credits of Mandatory General Courses, 10 credits of Language Two Courses, and 6 credits of irrelevant ESL/EFL Courses. What further aggravates the issue

at hand is that 12 crucial Basic Courses have also been omitted from the curriculum. Now, it is evident what a severe blow the efficacy of a curriculum of 136 credits will receive when as many as 50 of its credits are damaged in one way or another. Data analysis of the issue carried out making use of the theoretical framework adopted, revealed that RETP is a curriculum initially shaped in a particular historical context in contemporary Iran known as the Cultural Revolution; a period during which decision-making for educational planning underwent a fundamental change. A new non-elected, politically-appointed institute, CRHC, took over the professional educational responsibilities from the relevant Iranian exclusive decision-maker (i.e. Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology) to impose a large number of ideologically-motivated courses on the curricula to mark its hegemony and distribute its favored ideological values. The disproportionate mandatory sociopolitical, as well as Islamic, courses incorporated into RETP were intended to ideologically 'vaccinate' the students against the so-called secular Western ideologies. In practice however, such professionally irrelevant, overweight courses contravened the professional explicit dual objectives of the programme. Afterwards, concentrating on the sociocultural developments in both Iran and the world, and enumerating a number of reasons requiring curricular innovation, the rest of the study was followed by a list of recommended relevant courses to enhance the competence and performance of the target students of RETP.

The findings of this study are on the one hand in line with the researchers who argued that ETP was affected by the curricula of either English Language Teaching Programme or English Language and Literature Programme (Ebraahimi 2010; Mirzaebrahim Tehraani 2002; Mollanazar 2002; Nasre Esfahaani 2010), or those researchers on the other hand who argued that the curriculum is far from efficacy because it has

failed to take into consideration the views of the insiders (Haajibaabaaee 2010) or has insufficiently cared for the real market needs (Khoshsaligheh 2013; Nasrollahi Shahri et al. 2016; Saalaari & Khazaaefarid 2014). However, the most important findings of the study (i.e., the overabundance of ideologically-motivated irrelevant Mandatory General Courses in RETP, the necessity to making revisions in how to offer the courses, or to substitute them with an equivalent number of relevant translation-related courses) have not been addressed in any other research articles before. It is particularly so because a series of 50 irrelevant credits in a curriculum of 136 credits can adversely affect the efficacy of any plan in achieving its objectives. Another new finding of the study was to call for a purposeful, systematic coordination among the professionally-relevant bodies to restore their authorities to be able to make a real, valid evaluation of the educational needs of the student clients. It is hoped that the recommended courses may accommodate the explicit dual objectives of RETP, in enhancing the relevant competence and performance of the students, and finally contribute to the efficacy of the curriculum in its specific context.

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