A Quality Assessment of the Teaching Procedures, Faculty Performance and Curriculum of the Interpretation Courses at Bachelor's Level: A CIPP Approach[1]

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Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the quality of interpretation courses at undergraduate level for the students of English translation. The participants included faculty members (N = 9), graduates (N= 16) and undergraduate students (N= 70) of Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran. The data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview using Stufflebeam's four-component model. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. In addition, the qualitative data were analyzed via content analysis. The results of the study demonstrated that the teaching materials presented in the interpretation courses have to be revised along with the undergraduate interpretation program. In addition, it was revealed that interpretation courses have to be re-designed in terms of both instruction and evaluation especially in terms of the teaching methods, instructional facilities and aides, and exam administration. The implication of this research would result in a reform in instruction and evaluation approaches commonly used over the past decades, especially in terms of using authentic tasks and test content.

Keywords: interpretation courses, B.A. level, CIPP model, undergraduate students, English translation

Introduction

Evaluating higher education academic programs is rapidly gaining significance as the principal gauge of effectiveness (Banta, Griffin, Flateby, & Kahn, 2009). The revised curriculum of English translation for B.A. level was acted by the Supreme Council of Higher Education in 2016 and was put into practice in 2016-2017 academic year in different faculties across Iran. Due to its recency of implementation, little, if any, is known about its effectiveness, strength and weaknesses. Achieving the appropriate quality of the undergraduate programs in English translation requires repeated evaluation and identification of the shortcomings and deficiencies of the program since such educational programs should be designed so that they can train the current students as future specialists (Jain & Prasad, 2018). In higher education, high-quality education is achieved when the students have reached the desired competency, as stated in the curriculum. In other words, education and educational programs should have to end in the graduates who are interested in improving knowledge after graduation and enjoy sufficient up-to-date experience and skills (Barrett, Duggan, Lowe, Nikel & Ukpo, 2006).

Few attempts have been made to apply context-input-process-product model (CIPP) in English departments in Iran. One of these scarce examples is the one done by Karimnia and Kay (2015) to evaluate TEFL undergraduate programs, the results of which demonstrated the necessity of revising the teaching materials along with the TEFL program itself, the lack of emphasizing learning strategies, and the necessity of focusing on teaching specific courses. Another study conducted in English departments in Iran was by Kaveh and Karimnia (2015), which focused on M.A. level translation courses at Islamic Azad Universities. They concluded that making revisions in terms of the materials being taught at these courses is a must along with other curricular aspects. In an older study, Birjandi and Nosratinia (2009) conducted an evaluation of postgraduate translation courses in Iranian

English departments based on CIPP and concluded that "the first and most important aim of establishing this program" which is "training the expert translators skilled in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences, etc. to the great extent is ignored" (p. 37).

It seems that there has been little concern about evaluating and assessing English translation programs, in general, and relatively, B.A. level courses have not been seriously and critically evaluated. It may be argued that absence or scarcity of evidence on the efficacy of the current translation education and the quality of undergraduate English translation programs in Iran demands further efforts for evaluating the quality of translation education programs in English departments.

The CIPP, developed in the 1960s purposely for educational evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2002, 2005), has been described by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) as "a comprehensive framework for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs, projects, personnel, products, organizations, and evaluation systems" (p. 325). The four components of the CIPP model provide robust indicators for proactively evaluating organizational health and success.

Stufflebeams' CIPP model, widely identified as a decision-oriented approach to curriculum evaluation, is not set to outline the measures educational administrators are able to adopt to effectively select, implement, and evaluate the upshots of a given instructional method or educational procedure (Stufflebeam, 2002). However, it delivers educational administrators with the yardsticks to evaluate to what extent they failed or succeeded at a given stage of an educational process in order to make appropriate decisions about the feasible future adjustments in the program (Stufflebeam, 2005).

Stufflebeam's CIPP model is identified by its four basic principles (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). They act as pillars on which the evaluative measures are built. They further serve stakeholders of any level, depending on the

scope of evaluation, with regard to improving and progressing current orientations, judging current educational or administrative status objectively, and adhering to administrative standards, educational goals and instructional practices which were professionally and precisely defined (Stufflebeam, 2002). Considering the principles of this model and the scope of this study, the four main domains of course evaluation were defined, with reference to Stufflebeam's (2002, 2005), as follows in this study (1) context evaluation which is mainly concerned with probing the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the participants on whether educational goals and instructional objectives of the interpretation courses can be arranged in a line with the educational standards held by and the intentions stated by the Supreme Board of Cultural Revolution; (2) input evaluation which was intended to determine the perspectives and perceptions of the participants with regard to the quantity and quality of the current educational resources available in the current courses of interpretation; (3) process evaluation focusing on determining how the participants perceived the actual implementation and execution of teaching and learning processes in the interpretation courses; (4) product evaluation concentrating on shedding light on the perspectives and perceptions of the participants in terms of the extent to which the interpretation courses could influence or impact the either professional or social life of the participants.

Method

This research is best classified as a descriptive quantitative-qualitative study. The rationale behind adopting this research method was collecting actual first-hand data that would elucidate the prevailing status of the interpretation courses held at B.A. level from a comparative perspective and further identify the current glitches or justify the current practice the English departments.

Participants

The participants included 70 senior students of English translation (49 female and 21 male) from different English proficiency levels and translation skills, selected based on convenient sampling at English departments of the Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran Province currently taking the interpretation courses. They were of similar ages (ranging from 21 to 25) since the observed mode was 22. They were informed about the purpose of the study and promised about the confidentiality of their responses. The study was a survey for students and faculty members. Moreover, the participants included the faculty members (n= 12) from the very departments and B.A. holders of English translation (n=31) who graduated in 2020 from the aforementioned universities.

Instrumentation

The required quantitative data and qualitative data were collected by a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, as described in the following paragraphs.

Questionnaire

A thirty-two-item questionnaire validated by Ranjbar and Rahimy (2020) was used to collect the required quantitative data. This questionnaire including five-scale Likert-type items ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was specifically designed to evaluate context (8 items), input (6 items), process (4 items) and product (14 items) of B.A. interpretation courses. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .85 using Cronbach's alpha.

Interview

In addition to the questionnaire, the study relied on interviewing the faculty members, graduates and undergraduates in order to access a more in-depth data regarding the context, input, process and product of the B.A.-level interpretation courses in Iran. The interview was conducted on a case-by-case basis in a one-

month period. It was a semi-structured interview based on a number of preplanned questions (prompts) to guide the interview. Each interview session began with clarifying the purpose of the interview to the interviewees and the intention of the researchers with regard to how the data would be used. The main episode of the interview lasted about 15 minutes.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

A quantitative-qualitative survey design was decided on for data collection, and the triangulation of the research methods was the basis for data collection. According to Denzin's (2017) classification of triangulation research, this study relied on methodological triangulation of quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative interview survey. The first step was approaching the participants and informing them about the goals of the study and inviting them to take part in data collection. The questionnaires were administered to the current students and the faculty members as well as the graduates of English departments at the Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran Province. After analyzing the questionnaire data, the qualitative phase began to probe the observed results of the questionnaires in-depth. The volunteering participants were invited to semi-structured interview sessions which were held on case-by-case basis. The sessions were recorded for future analysis after the participants were assured about the confidentiality of their answers and comments.

The analysis was done on the data collected from the graduates, students and faculty members of English departments. Then, they were combined into a data file for further computing. Descriptive statistics together with one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the participants' responses to questionnaire items. Moreover, the qualitative data from the interview were analyzed through content analysis including coding the evolving themes and re-analyzing the data by a second rater to guarantee the dependability of the extracted codes.

Results

To gain sound results, the researchers used the data from the questionnaire and the related qualitative data from the interview to focus on different aspects of BA-level interpretation courses. The collected results are described in the following sections, according to the main principles of CIPP model, i.e. context, input, process and product of English interpretation courses in the target departments. The following section demonstrates the results of analyses done with regard to the context of the interpretation courses. The observed means and standard deviations are reported for each group and the results of one-way ANOVA are also reported for each item.

Table 1. The results for the evaluation of the context of interpretation courses

Item	Indices			
	M (S)	M (I)	M (G)	F
1. The course is appropriate for the improvement of the students' interpretation skills.	2.08 (.89)	2.13 (.93)	2.13 (.81)	.87
2. The objectives of the course meet the needs of the students translating to/from English.	2.21 (.96)	2.19 (1.04)	2.15 (.91)	1.09
3. The objectives of the curriculum fit the students' preliminary knowledge of translating to/from English.	2.78 (1.07)	2.69 (.87)	2.91 (1.14)	1.13
4. The difficulty level of the topics in the curriculum fits their duration.	3.19 (.88)	2.98 (1.00)	3.05 (.86)	.88
5. The total duration of the course is enough.	2.56 (.76)	2.77 (.92)	2.40 (.83)	1.02
6. The textbook (or content) of the course matches the students' level.	3.83 (1.17)	3.66 (.96)	3.53 (1.04)	.83
7. The textbook (or content) attracts the students' attention.	3.11 (1.11)	3.66 (.94)	3.17 (.91)	.97
8. The textbook (or content) of the course is comprehensible.	3.89 (1.19)	3.14 (.89)	3.73 (1.13)	1.13

M(S): Observed means for the students; M(I): Observed means for the instructors; M(G): Observed means for the graduates

As shown in Table 1, with regard to the participants' answers to the first three items which are all below 3, the theoretical mean of the five-point scale adopted in the questionnaire, it had to be argued that the objectives of the course are not developed based on the students' needs and interest, and are hard to achieve and the objectives of the courses are hopeless in reality. According to Table 1, there was not a significant difference among the groups in terms of their perceptions regarding the time they spend on interpretation skills in the interpretation courses. That is, all of the parties agreed on the insufficient amount of time spent on interpretation skills in the current courses.

In addition, the participants agreed on the weak harmony between the content of the course or textbooks and interpretation skill instruction. Also, the result of the interview showed that students are concerned about their scores, so their first aim is to learn each skill for this purpose. Although most of the instructors spend the majority of their time on practicing interpretation techniques, the level of difficulty of the content to be taught is also another factor to be considered for the time allocated to it. Another problem that was mentioned during the interviews was that because interpretation skills are difficult to master, some students were not interested in practicing individually or in groups out of the class; so, it is less likely that they use the taught interpretation techniques in their classes.

Table 2. The results for the evaluation of input for the interpretation courses

Item No.	Item	Indices			
		M (S)	M (I)	M (G)	F
1	The audio-visual content of the course helps the students learn easily.	2.19 (1.03)	2.23 (1.15)	2.08 (.93)	.78
2	The audio-visual content of the course attracts the students' attention.	2.03 (.92)	2.33 (1.12)	2.11 (.88)	.92
3	The audio-visual content of the course has positive impacts on the students'	2.98 (1.09)	2.19 (1.00)	2.81 (1.16)	1.34

	interpretation skills.				
4	The class activities of the course help the students learn easily.	3.71 (1.21)	3.33 (1.27)	3.66 (1.33)	1.19
5	The class activity of the curriculum attracts the students' attention.	3.17 (1.19)	3.33 (1.04)	3.06 (.94)	.88
6	The class activity of the course has positive effects on the students' interpretation skills.	3.21 (1.11)	3.47 (1.27)	3.12 (1.07)	.79

M(S): Observed means for the students; M(I): Observed means for the instructors; M(G): Observed means for the graduates

As shown in Table 2, there was an insignificant difference among the groups in terms of their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of interpretation skills course, considering the insignificant F values. That is, the participants agreed on the insufficient amount of material and methods used for teaching interpretation skills. According to the results of the interview, content of the interpretation skills courses is not helpful for the students to enhance their interpretation skills. In other words, the taught interpretation skills are not effective enough. According to the results of the interview, the method with which interpretation skills are presented in the programs for interpretation is infertile and barren, and the focus of the course sometimes shifts to text (script) translation.

Table 3. The results for the evaluation of process of interpretation courses

Item No.	Item	Indices			
		M (S)	M (I)	M (G)	F
1	Sufficient activities and exercises are done on each new topic in the course.	3.11 (1.16)	3.81 (1.23)	3.17 (1.13)	.74
2	The number of the formative tests taken during the course is enough.	2.09 (.82)	2.44 (.91)	2.20 (.88)	1.13
3	During the course, the time spent on solving the students' problems about interpretation is enough.	2.12 (.71)	2.38 (.78)	2.03 (.68)	.86
4	The course enables the students to participate in the course actively.	2.72 (.73)	2.03 (.66)	2.62 (.76)	1.08

M(S): Observed means for the students; M(I): Observed means for the instructors; M(G):

Observed means for the graduates

As it is shown in Table 3, the results for the first item indicate the deficiency of the instructional content for interpretation skills, as reflected in the observed means which are a little above 3 and insignificant F value. It can be seen that the outcome of teachers' instruction and the course content were insufficient for the students to learn interpretation skills better. The results of the analysis for items 1, 3 and 4 show that the participants stated that the exercises were poor and agreed on their poor effect on learning interpretation skills. In other words, the participants also highlighted the insufficient number of exercises and their ineffectiveness in terms of teaching interpretation skills. In addition, with regard to the observed results for the second item, it has to be mentioned that the formative and diagnostic assessment of the students' performance is a further practical deficiency of the current interpretation courses at English departments.

A further analysis of the data from the interview showed that the participants agreed with the insufficiency of the course books and content in terms of ignoring interpretation skills, engaging old uninteresting content and lack of interpretation skill tasks. In addition, those teachers who use updated sources offer interpretation tasks deficiently due to the fact that the hardware and facilities for teaching interpretation skills such as players or multimedia equipment are not available in their classes. In addition, instructors stated that even if the infrastructure for teaching interpretation skills were provided in classes or they could have an ideal educational aid for teaching interpretation skills, they would not attempt to do so because they believed the students lack the threshold level of general English proficiency to achieve the rudimentary levels of doing interpretation tasks.

Table 4. The results for the evaluation of product for the interpretation courses

Item No.	Item	Indices			
		M (S)	M (I)	M (G)	F

1	The course helps the students to acquire the knowledge of interpretation skills they need for various business areas.	3.05 (1.21)	3.51 (1.33)	3.22 (.91)	.67
2	The interpretation skills the students acquire at the end of the course are satisfactory	3.11 (1.19)	3.29 (1.13)	3.38 (1.26)	.81
3	The course gives the students the opportunity to use their interpretation skills.	2.73 (.89)	2.17 (.77)	2.91 (.93)	1.19
4	The course helps the students to acquire the habit of studying in groups.	2.41 (.68)	2.09 (.76)	2.26 (.63)	.74
5	The course increases the students' interpretation skills.	3.83 (1.31)	3.33 (1.18)	3.76 (1.23)	1.21
6	The projects assigned in the course affect the students' interpretation skills positively.	3.06 (1.07)	3.61 (.94)	3.18 (1.15)	.56
7	The course motivates the students to improve their interpretation skills.	3.23 (1.23)	3.98 (1.41)	3.57 (1.16)	.91
8	The course contributes to the students' work related with their technical fields.	3.11 (.96)	3.54 (1.11)	2.96 (.73)	1.03
9	The course forms a basis for the students' future needs related with interpretation.	3.28 (1.14)	3.46 (1.26)	2.93 (.81)	1.26
10	The course meets the students' existing needs related with interpretation.	3.28 (1.22)	3.39 (1.33)	2.83 (.86)	1.13
11	The course meets the students' individual needs.	3.33 (1.26)	3.86 (1.43)	3.01 (1.03)	.87
12	The course meets the students' individual interests.	3.54 (1.13)	4.07 (.95)	3.66 (1.33)	1.42
13	The course meets the students' characteristics needs.	2.83 (.86)	3.31 (1.17)	2.93 (.93)	1.09
14	The course helps the students to acquire the habit of translating.	2.56 (.77)	3.11 (1.03)	2.73 (.88)	.94

M(S): Observed means for the students; M(I): Observed means for the instructors; M(G): Observed means for the graduates

The results shown in Table 4 imply that most of the observed means are below 4 which show the relative infertility of the interpretation courses in terms of interpretation skill development of the students. Accordingly, students' interests,

needs and motivation are not among the priorities and are relatively ignored in the interpretation courses at the surveyed English departments. Accordingly, the differences seen among the participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the interpretation courses in terms of internalizing interpretation skills were insignificant. In other words, it can be argued that the outcome of the course is a moderately motivated, interested and skillful interpreter improperly prepared for the workplace needs and business demands.

Discussion

With regard to the findings reported above, it may be argued that the time allotted to English interpretation courses poorly matches the required material expected to be presented or simply covered during the course. In addition, the educational setting of these courses may not be considered an ideal one for both the undergraduate students and their instructors. Accordingly, there seems to be a need for making a modification in terms of course requirements, especially, in terms of the re-organization and revision of the content and instructional objectives as well as the difficulty level of lessons. An additional point which was highlighted by the participants was the methods which are commonly used for teaching translation skills in BA-level technical courses. Regrettably, the current common methods for teaching technical translation skills and the textbooks as well are mainly based on deductive and product-oriented teacher-centered methods in accordance to which the BA-level students are mainly concerned about their scores rather than their learning the targeted technical interpretation skills and strategies per se.

Based on the findings of this study and as acknowledged by Ediger (2006), it is vital that course objectives be stated meticulously and prudently so that both learners and teachers are able to access and understand what is going to be finally achieved. It is unquestionable that declaring general long-term and specific (short-term) objectives greatly backs the academic achievement (Darussalam, 2010) and

curbs the observed discontent with the context and input of the current interpretation courses. What was observed in this study supports previous researchers' emphasis (e.g. Ringsted, Skaarup, Henriksen & Davis, 2001) in that the absence of uniform updated instructional methods and clear educational objectives may lead to pitiable educational achievements.

In this evaluative study of English technical translation courses, both instructors and students as well as the graduates considered that midterm and final exams were ineffective for developing better interpretation skills. In terms of the evaluation of the product of the courses at English department, the obtained results disclosed that the BA-level students believed that they were less competent in English interpretation skills which could be ascribed to the absence of learning opportunities for authentic practices and tasks. Furthermore, it was determined that English interpretation skills were not authentically evaluated in the BA-level program, either.

The basic findings of the present study were similar to those reported by Foroozandeh, Riazi and Sadighi (2008). The results of this study are in fact in line with their study in that the participants in both studies accredited that: the officially prescribed English translation curriculum (a) requires revision, at least, in accordance with the stakeholders' needs and interests, (b) has to be modified in terms of its delivery with regard to the available academic settings; and (c) has to be upgraded in terms of its screening procedures.

The findings of this study are also in line with those of Keyvanfar (1999) and Rahmani (2007), in that the curriculum failed to achieve its pre-defined instructional objectives, to name the most prominent ones, (1) attaining general and balanced English proficiency in all four language skills of English, (2) mastering the required interpretation skills required for interpreting different text genres mainly due to the shortage of adequate authentic opportunities.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the quality of interpretation skill and strategy instruction at the programs at the undergraduate English translation at B.A. level. The results revealed a general pattern of poor instruction and evaluation of interpretation skills in the program so that the interpretation skills instruction in the courses was not successful with regard to the program's objectives including gaining academic proficiency in interpretation skills.

Based on what was discussed above, the major implication of the study at hand is the current BA-level English technical interpretation courses are in need of a number of substantial revisions to further fit the needs and interests of the students. The main recommendations and pedagogical suggestions might be concerned with improving and revising in the instructional objectives and content (material), in addition to instructional methods. Furthermore, the other implication emerged from the findings was improving assessment dimensions of the BA-level English interpretation courses. Additionally, as indicated by the participants concerning the disgruntlement with the context of the BA-level English interpretation program, further rearrangement of the curriculum is needed in terms of time of instruction in the curriculum.

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ارزشیابی کیفیت روش تدریس، عملکرد استادان و برنامۀ درسی ترجمۀ شفاهی دورۀ کارشناسی مترجمی زبان انگلیسی بر اساس الگوی سیپ[۱]

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چکیده

این مطالعه به دنبال ارزیابی کیفیت دوره‌های ترجمۀ شفاهی در سطح کارشناسی برای دانشجویان مترجمی زبان انگلیسی بود. برای انجام این‌کار شرکت‌کنندگان ازطریق نمونه‌گیری در دسترس، شامل اعضای هیئت‌علمی (۹ = N) فارغ‌التحصیل (۱۶ = N) و دانشجویان دورۀ لیسانس (۷۰ = N) انتخاب شدند. داده‌ها از طریق یک پرسشنامه و مصاحبۀ نیمه‌ساختاری با استفاده از مدل Stufflebeam جمع‌آوری شدندکه شامل چهار بخش اصلی، شامل محتوا، ورودی، فرایند و محصول می‌شود. داده‌های جمع‌آوری‌شده با استفاده از روش آمار توصیفی و آمار استنباطی، آزمون تحلیل واریانس یک‌طرفه تجزیه‌وتحلیل شد. به‌علاوه داده‌های کیفی از طریق تحلیل محتوا تحلیل شدند. در مورد واکنش‌های شرکت‌کنندگان، نتایج این مطالعه نشان داد که بسیاری ازآنها توافق دارند که مطالب آموزشی ارایه‌شده در دوره‌های ترجمۀ شفاهی باید همراه با برنامۀ کارشناسی ترجمه مورد بازنگری قرار گیرد. به‌علاوه، آنها بر این باورند که استادان باید بر آموزش دوره‌های ترجمۀ شفاهی و بر آموزش و ارزیابی تمرکز کنند. با توجه به نتایج مصاحبۀ نیمه‌ساختارمند، اغلب اشاره شد که اصلاحات قابل‌توجهی باید در طراحی روش تدریس ترجمۀ شفاهی به‌خصوص از نظر مواد آموزشی، تجهیزات آموزشی و برگزاری امتحان اجرا شود. مصاحبه‌شوندگان اظهار داشتند که روش‌های ارزیابی و ارزشیابی معمولاً همانی است که درطول دهه‌های گذشته مورد استفاده قرار می‌گرفت که باید در آنها تجدید نظر شود، به‌خصوص از لحاظ روش و محتوای آزمون و آموزش.

واژه‌های راهنما: الگوی سیپ، دانشجویان دوره کارشناسی، دروس ترجمه شفاهی، دوره کارشناسی، مترجمی زبان انگلیسی

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