Curriculum Quality: A Guarantee of Competences and Employability for Iranian Graduates with a Master's Degree in Translation

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: The employability of Iranian graduates with a master's degree in translation is a significant concern that requires thorough examination. A critical factor influencing the competences and employability of these graduates is the curriculum implemented by academic institutions. This study specifically examines the effectiveness of the curriculum offered by Iranian universities for M.A. students Insights were collected from translation instructors at branches of Islamic Azad University in Tehran, public universities, senior M.A. translation students, freelance translators, and in-house translators. **Methods**: Data collection was done using a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The questionnaire, consisting of 24 items, focused on competences outlined in the EMT network (2017), including *language and culture*, *translation*, *technology*, *personal and interpersonal*, and *service provision* competences. **Results**: The results indicated that while the curriculum contributes to language and culture competence and translation competence, it lacks in developing other crucial competences like technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision competences. This finding highlights a gap in the curriculum's ability to nurture all competences outlined in the EMT network. **Conclusions**: As a result, it can be concluded that the structure of translation training programs does not align well with the competences and job opportunities for M.A. graduates. Addressing these shortcomings is essential to ensure that graduates have the necessary skills and competences to effectively meet the demands of the translation profession.

Introduction

The quality of a university depends on many factors, including the curriculum offered to students. In other words, the effectiveness of the curriculum enables university stakeholders and faculty to provide students with quality education. In this context, Slade (2017) believes that the use of modern translation tools and professional development are two important factors for quality education. According to Sharma (2023), an appropriate curriculum helps teachers develop useful teaching methods and practices and understand what students should know. More broadly, an effective curriculum demonstrates responsiveness to the evolving needs of contemporary student cohorts, who present a diverse array of requirements and expectations upon entering higher education institutions (Andrews and McVitty, 2023). The authors further states that chief among these is the imperative of enhancing their employability prospects.

The contentious aspect of curriculum design revolves around its content, with various factors such as political, cultural, and technical considerations at play. Among these, the technical factor is considered the most important. Technical factors play an essential role in curriculum development by helping align instructional strategies with relevant competences. This process involves ensuring that materials and facilities meet industry standards and that instructors receive proper training, as recommended by Narsico and Narsico (2023). According to the OECD (2020), technical factors primarily focus on the intended curriculum, which includes integrating global competences as a separate subject. This approach involves a range of activities aimed at enhancing students' understanding of themselves and their environment, going beyond just acquiring knowledge about global issues.

Besides, comprehensive knowledge of curriculum development is crucial for content design. As Wyse (2020) highlights, the importance of knowledge of both national and international contexts has a major impact on the quality and development of the curriculum. Murray et al. (2020) emphasized the central role of student voice and agency in curriculum design, viewing them as important elements of knowledge that should not be overlooked. Incorporating research into curriculum content development is also crucial to ensure consistency with best practices in teaching and learning, as noted by Matthew and Courtney (2021). In the complicated process of curriculum development, knowledge, student voice and

agency, and research serve as key tools, with mapping and assessment emerging as important steps in this multifaceted endeavor.

Curriculum evaluation involves systematically assessing a curriculum's effectiveness in achieving its predetermined objectives and targets, as outlined by Jawabreh and Gündüz (2023). The authors clarify that this process includes collecting and analyzing data on various aspects of the curriculum, such as its content, delivery methods, and outcomes. The information gathered is then used to make decisions aimed at improving the overall effectiveness of the curriculum.

In line with the views of Doğan et al. (2023), these evaluations require rigorous empirical research to examine the program's acceptance, value, quality, effectiveness, and relevance within the societal context in which it operates. Furthermore, it also evaluates how well the curriculum meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders and aligns with relevant policies as the author implies. Handelzalts (2019) asserts that relevance is an important factor in curriculum development. This idea is supported by Ntshwarang et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of relevance in determining the validity, significance, and purpose of curriculum content. Evaluating relevance is essential not only for meeting the immediate needs of participants, but also for shaping future training strategies and promoting sustainable educational approaches, as noted by Karacaoğlu (2023). Therefore, assessing relevance allows stakeholders to determine if the curriculum includes courses that meet market demands and enhance students' prospects for employability.

The study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum offered by Iranian universities for M.A. translation students. This assessment is carried out within the framework of the systematic competence model, which includes *language and culture* competence, *translation* competence, *technology* competence, *personal and interpersonal* competence, and *service provision* competence. This model is proposed by the EMT framework (2017) for translator training and competence.

The aim of the study is to collect the perceptions of translation teachers, senior M.A. translation students, freelance translators, and in-house translators regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing graduates for employment opportunities. Additionally, identify any gaps or areas for improvement in the curriculum to enhance the employability of M.A. translation graduates.

The importance of this research lies in its attempt to guide the development of university curricula. The aim is to align these curricula with the needs, success and employability of M.A. graduates. In a broader context, the curriculum should respond to the needs of master's graduates in translation and enhance their competence and employability. This study represents the second phase of a research project. The project aims to assess the ability of Iranian universities to improve the qualifications and employability of M.A. translation graduates across the country. To achieve the aim of this study, the following questions are raised:

1.   How effective is the curriculum of Iranian universities in promoting existing competences in the EMT network's (2017) framework?

2.   Does the curriculum of Iranian universities align with the improvement of competences and employability of master's graduates?

Translation at Iranian Universities

Iran has   about forty   universities, including both   public   and   private institutions, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs in translation in multiple languages.   Admission   to   these   programs   typically requires a   competitive entrance examination known   as a   "competition," except   for   undergraduate programs, which may have   different   criteria. Among   the   various   specializations   in this field, English translation stands out as particularly popular.

English teaching is widely integrated into the curriculum in all Iranian universities, with an emphasis on translations from both English to Persian and Persian to English at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Joint courses between English language and literature and translation programs cover foundational and specialized topics. Undergraduate translation students take a variety of courses, including advanced translation, translation of literary texts, individual translation, translation of Islamic texts, and principles and methods of translation.

Furthermore, participants enrolled in English language and literature programs engage in comprehensive literary inquiries encompassing poetry, drama, fiction, and the historical trajectory of English literary traditions, alongside specialized modules focused on translation studies. Linguistics constitutes a foundational element interlinking these disciplines, constituting an integral component of the syllabi for both translation cohorts and students within English language and literature programs.

The educational journey for translation scholars begins with the acquisition of a strong comprehension of translational frameworks and the nuanced differences existing among languages. The foundational principles of translation theory are introduced clearly and accessibly at the outset. As scholars progress, they delve deeper into the intricate domains of translational paradigms, gaining a thorough understanding of the core principles governing the translation process.

The pedagogical trajectory involves a systematic progression, starting with the translation of simple sentences and advancing to more complex compound structures. Ultimately, students develop the ability to translate literary works and specialized texts with precision. An essential part of their educational journey is gaining linguistic proficiency and foundational English language skills within their English studies. This dual proficiency enables students to navigate between languages seamlessly, excelling in both informal and formal translation contexts.

At the tertiary level, translation scholars focus on enhancing expertise in key areas such as translation methodologies, principles, and linguistic analysis. They are also required to improve their proficiency in Persian language and literature. This comprehensive mastery is crucial, especially for translating various languages into Persian, where a strong command of the language is essential for accurate and effective translation.

Translation Studies (TS) modules are widely available in many academic institutions nationwide. These modules aim to prepare skilled translators for roles in organizations, ministries, and government agencies. However, the standard four-year undergraduate program often does not provide enough time for the comprehensive development of students' skills in translation principles, techniques, cognitive abilities, and a deep understanding of complex translation challenges.

In response to these constraints, postgraduate programs have been strategically designed to address these challenges and cultivate skilled translators. Master of Arts programs typically span three semesters and are structured to include a balance of theoretical and practical courses, totaling 26 credits. Additionally, students are required to complete a research project worth 6 credits towards their program completion.

Out of the total 26 credits, 22 are allocated to compulsory courses, leaving 4 credits for elective courses. It's worth noting that the distribution of credits for each course type might differ across

universities. For example, certain branches of Islamic Azad universities, such as the Science and Research branch, adhere to a consistent credit distribution pattern between mandatory and elective courses (see Table 1). On the other hand, Islamic Azad university branches like the Central branch allocate 6 credits for optional courses and 4 credits for the research project.

Table 1. Titles of the compulsory and optional courses as well as each course credit offered by Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch

Compulsory Courses			Optional Courses		
No.	Title	Credit	No.	Title	Credit
1	Pragmatic functional linguistics and translation	2	1	Cognition of cultural elements in two languages	2
2	Translation theories	2	2	Article writing	2
3	Persian literature in the world literature	2			
4	Functional literary criticism	2			
5	Advanced evaluation and translation	2			
6	Research methods in translation studies	2			
7	Morphology and equivalence in translation	2			
8	Translation models	2			
9	Translation workshop	2			
10	Critical analysis of translated texts	2			
11	Seminars in translation issue	2			
12	Dissertation	6			
Total		28	Total		4

In Iran, there is a limited spectrum of diversity among universities in the structure and allocation of credits within TS programs. A notable characteristic is the absence of optional courses. Universities design mandatory courses based on their resources and circumstances, without considering students' preferences. For example, the inclusion of computer-aided translation (CAT) courses depends on the availability of modern computer facilities and specialized instructors.

Employment opportunities in the translation field mainly favor master's degree holders over bachelor's degree recipients due to their more versatile skill set. M.A. graduates have a wide range of career options, including roles as language institute instructors, positions in various organizations, ministries, embassies, and agencies, collaborations with foreign publications in the country, participation in dubbing foreign radio and television productions, opportunities in tour guiding, conference participation, employment in translation agencies, and exploration of other avenues. It is important to note that not all M.A. graduates have equal access to these opportunities, as eligibility is based on individual commitment and proficiency levels.

The EMT network's framework

The EMT network (2017) developed an updated competence framework to establish a new system for enhancing the employability of translation graduates within the EMT framework. This framework would encompass the fundamental principles of the EMT network and encompass the essential skills and competences required of future translation graduates. The Board also aimed to develop a straightforward and effective competence framework to assess universities' capacity to deliver consistent learning outcomes in the upcoming application cycle for EMT network admission.

The framework established by the EMT network (2017, pp. 6-11) encompasses five primary competences. These competences are detailed below:

1. Language and culture: This competence consists of knowledge and skills relating to linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, and transcultural aspects that are considered the foundation for advanced translation competence.

2. Translation: It is the central component of the competences included in the framework for translation provision. This competence involves not only the actual transfer of meaning between two languages but also includes "all the strategic, methodological, and thematic competences that are involved before, during, and after the transfer phase itself."

3. Technology: This competence involves the use of modern translation technologies within the translation process.

4. Personal and interpersonal: This competence encompasses all the generic skills, often referred to as soft skills, that enhance a graduate's adaptability and employability.

5. Service provision: This refers to the skills and knowledge required to apply translation to language services in a professional context – from client awareness and negotiation to project management and quality assurance.

The EMT network argues that this framework explicitly disclaims the intention to provide a comprehensive depiction or model that includes all the competences, skills, and knowledge required for translation graduates. Like its predecessor, the framework outlines a standardized set of learning outcomes designed for EMT Master's degree programs, the network delineates. The EMT Board explains that these outcomes are described about both overarching competences and specific skills, specifying the expected proficiency levels for graduates.

According to the EMT network (2017), the framework is based on the fundamental idea that *translation* is a purposeful process aimed at meeting individual, societal, or institutional needs. Additionally, the framework recognizes the complex nature of the profession, which involves various domains of competence and skills necessary for effectively conveying meaning between different languages. The EMT network explicitly emphasizes that this multifaceted profession encompasses a range of tasks performed by those who provide translation services.

As the EMT network (2017) implies, their framework is now widely recognized in academic and language industry circles for training translators and assessing translation skills across the European Union and beyond. Notably, this framework, introduced in 2017, distinguishes itself from earlier models such as Kermis (2008), Šeböková (2010), and PACTE (2014) by placing emphasis not only on translation competence but also on the overall competence of translators. That is why it is considered an appropriate framework for the present study.

Recent Studies in the Field

There are numerous recent studies dealing with the evaluation of university curricula, and numerous researchers from various disciplines in Iran unrelated to translation have addressed this important question. For example, Farmand et al. (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of the master's degree curriculum in medical education in Iran and several other countries, including Canada and Australia. The aim was to identify differences and similarities between them. The results showed that Iran uses a centralized exam to admit students, which prevents most universities from independently selecting students. In addition, the duration of study in Iranian universities is usually 1 to 3 years, depending on whether it is part-time or full-time, and many of the universities examined offer this program as modular courses.

Similarly, Kordi and Koosha (2018) used a similar method to assess the curriculum of the Iranian English Language Teaching (ELT) Ph.D. program. They compared it to the curricula of five prestigious foreign universities in the United States, Turkey, and Ireland. The findings showed that both students and instructors agreed that the Iranian ELT Ph.D. curriculum needed significant revisions in various areas, including goals, admission criteria, and required courses. Turning to another academic field, Beigi et al. (2011) evaluated the quality of the curriculum for the Master's program in Educational Management and Planning offered by public universities in Tehran. The

assessment of the curriculum quality revealed that both students and faculty members were generally satisfied with the educational planning studies curriculum.

TS programs have also undergone assessment, and Samir (2022) examined the effectiveness of the M.A. English Translation curriculum in Iran in order to identify its shortcomings. The study found that certain courses, such as Translation Workshop and Theories of Translation, were beneficial. However, courses like Literary Criticism and Philosophy of Education were deemed insufficient in enhancing students' theoretical understanding and practical translation skills. As a result, there is a recognized need for modifications to the course contents or the overall curriculum.

In a similar vein, Shahsavarzadeh and Tabrizi (2020) explored Translation Theories, a crucial component of the M.A. program in Iranian translation universities, by gathering students' opinions about the course. The study revealed that M.A. students expressed dissatisfaction with this course, primarily because it did not align well with their practical translation work. Additionally, the teaching methods for translation theories were perceived as not meeting their future expectations. Consequently, the authors advocate for significant revisions to the Translation Theories course within the master's program.

At the undergraduate level, Khoshsaligheh et al. (2019) conducted an investigation into the perspectives of Iranian English translator trainees regarding the curriculum that had been in use for over two decades. The research aimed to assess whether the trainees' requirements aligned more with the old curriculum, which had been in use for more than twenty years, or with the recently revised curriculum introduced in 2018. The results indicated that trainees considered translation practice courses to be the most crucial aspect of the curriculum, signaling a preference for hands-on translation training.

In a related context, Dabaghi et al. (2015) examined the efficiency of interpreter training courses provided to B.A. translation students in Iranian universities. Their findings revealed that a significant majority of participants felt that the program did not adequately cover the fundamental definitions and concepts of interpreting. The skills and techniques outlined in the curriculum were either not taught or briefly mentioned, highlighting the inadequacy of the curriculum in equipping B.A. translation students with essential interpreting skills and knowledge.

The studies mentioned above share a common aim of enhancing the skills and knowledge of translation students by identifying weaknesses in the curriculum, as indicated by their findings.

What sets the current study apart from previous ones is its specific focus on translation *graduates*, whereas earlier research predominantly centered on either undergraduate or postgraduate translation *students*. Moreover, this study employed a thorough theoretical framework encompassing various competences essential for master's graduates and their employability. Essentially, it prioritized competences acquired through university curricula rather than other factors. For example, examining which courses in the curriculum were the most beneficial or determining which translation courses, theoretical or practical, were the most crucial aspect of the curriculum. Such investigations may have addressed one or two competences, not a wide range as proposed by the EMT network (2017). This led the researcher to maintain the belief that a comprehensive examination of this field of study is still necessary. Hence, the present study aims to address the existing gap in research by examining the primary challenges related to the competences and employability of graduates with master's degrees in translation by evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum provided by Iranian universities for master's students.

Material and Methods

Participants

The present study involved 37 translation teachers, who were selected through convenience sampling from visiting and faculty members at both Islamic Azad University branches in Tehran, as well as public universities. Additionally, 81 senior M.A. translation students and 113 translators participated in the research. The senior students were randomly selected from Islamic Azad University and public translation universities. The translators, who were M.A. graduates working as either freelance or in-house translators, were chosen through different methods. Freelancers were conveniently selected from the website www.proz.com , while in-house translators were randomly chosen from www.iacti/dafatertarjometehrann.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire consisting of 24 items was created for data collection in 2023. The researcher prepared it to gather feedback from participants in order to assess whether the curriculum in Iranian universities effectively equips master's graduates with the necessary competences and knowledge of translation. The questionnaire used a five-point scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, to evaluate responses.

The 24 items were designed in accordance with the competencies outlined in the EMT network (2017). Items one to three focused on *language and culture* competence, items four to 10 focused on *translation* competence, items 11 to 14 addressed *technology* competence, items 15 to 18 explored *personal and interpersonal* competence, and items 19 to 24 covered *service provision* competence.

To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, a panel of translation teachers, each with over five years of teaching experience in translation courses, reviewed and provided feedback on the wording and content. The questionnaire was then revised based on the feedback received. The validity of every item in the questionnaire was assessed via the construct validity. In this manner, the survey was distributed to 30 participants who possessed the same characteristics as those in the sample size.

The correlation between responses to each item on the questionnaire was calculated to determine if there was a significant correlation with the overall score. As shown in Table 2, the correlation coefficients for all items fall within the range of ± 0.50 to ± 1, indicating a strong correlation. Additionally, the significance level for each item was below .05 ($p > .05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that each item on the questionnaire exhibits validity.

Table 2. Correlation of the given answers to each item on the questionnaire

Items		N	r	p
1	The curriculum of translation universities is effective in enhancing the general or language-specific linguistic knowledge and skills of master's graduates in translation.	30	.721	.000
2	The curriculum of translation universities is effective in enhancing the sociolinguistic knowledge and skills of master's graduates in translation.	30	.626	.000
3	The curriculum of translation universities is effective in enhancing the cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills of master's graduates in translation.	30	.601	.000
4	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to analyze a source document, identify potential textual and cognitive difficulties and assess the strategies and resources needed for appropriate reformulation in line with communicative needs	30	.713	.000
5	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to evaluate the relevance and reliability of information sources with regard to translation needs.	30	.583	.000
6	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to acquire, develop and use thematic and domain-specific knowledge relevant to translation needs.	30	.629	.000
7	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to translate general and domain-specific material in one or several fields from one or several source languages into their target language(s),	30	.633	.000
8	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to analyze and justify their translation solutions and choices, using the appropriate metalanguage and applying appropriate theoretical approaches.	30	.582	.000
9	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to pre-edit source material for the purpose of potentially improving MT output quality, using appropriate pre-editing techniques	30	-.691	.000

10	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to apply post-editing to MT output using the appropriate post-editing levels and techniques according to the quality and productivity objectives.	30	-.637	.000
11	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to use the most relevant IT applications, including the full range of office software, and adapt rapidly to new tools and IT resources.	30	.728	.000
12	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to make effective use of search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools and CAT tools.	30	.703	.000
13	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to pre-process, process and manage files and other media/sources as part of the translation, e.g. video and multimedia files.	30	.672	.000
14	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to apply other tools in support of language and translation technology, such as workflow management software.	30	.619	.000
15	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to plan and manage time, stress and workload.	30	.725	.000
16	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to work in a team, including, where appropriate, in virtual, multicultural, and multilingual environments, using current communication technologies	30	.552	.001
17	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to take account of and adapt the organizational and physical ergonomics of the working environment.	30	.623	.000
18	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to continuously self-evaluate, update, and develop competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning.	30	.711	.000
19	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to monitor and take account of new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements and emerging job profiles.	30	.763	.000
20	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to approach existing clients and find new clients through prospecting and marketing strategies using the appropriate written and oral communication techniques.	30	.652	.000
21	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to clarify the requirements, objectives, and purposes of the client, recipients of the language service, and other stakeholders and offer the appropriate services to meet those requirements	30	.523	.003
22	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to organize, budget and manage translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers	30	.661	.000
23	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to understand and implement the standards applicable to the provision of a language service.	30	.692	.000
24	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to comply with professional ethical codes and standards and network with other translators and language providers via social media and professional associations.	30	.716	.000

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through test-retest reliability. The questionnaire was administered to a group of 15 individuals who shared similar characteristics with the study participants. After two weeks, the same group was retested, and the results of the two tests were correlated, indicating good reliability ($r = .87$).

Data collection and analysis

A questionnaire survey method was used in data collection for this study, which offers several advantages over other methods such as interviews and observations. In particular, it is cost-effective and efficient. This approach allowed the researcher to collect data from a large sample at a lower cost and in a shorter time. The questionnaire was personally distributed to translation teachers, M.A. graduates and in-house translators. For freelance translators, the questionnaire was sent by post and responses were received the same way.

Upon receiving the completed questionnaires, we used Excel Software to convert the data into text and analyze it according to the framework outlined by the EMT network (2017). Specifically, we created a new Excel worksheet tab for each item to keep the data organized and easily manageable. Each scale in the questionnaire was given a numerical label from 1 to 5, representing different levels of agreement from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The data was then sorted to make it easy to count the responses to each item and calculate the results.

Finally, tables were used to present the proportions of individual items in the questionnaires, and descriptive statistics were calculated for further statistical analysis. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to assess the significant relationship between each item and the participants' opinions. This comprehensive approach aimed to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in helping students acquire necessary competences and knowledge in translation and enhance their employability.

Results

According to Table 3, there was mostly equal agreement among the participants regarding the acquisition of general or language-specific knowledge through university curricula, with 44% expressing agreement and 49% disagreement. In contrast, a majority of the participants (61%) agreed that they acquired necessary sociolinguistics knowledge through the curriculum. However, opinions were more divided when it came to cultural and transcultural knowledge, with 55% of participants holding different views on this aspect.

Table 3. Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 1 to3 (language and culture competence)

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA
		%	%	%	%	%
1	The curriculum of universities is effective in enhancing the general or language-specific linguistic knowledge and skills of master's graduates in translation	5.0	39.0	7.0	41.0	8.0
2	The curriculum of universities is effective in enhancing the sociolinguistics knowledge and skills of future master's graduates in translation.	8.0	55.0	4.0	25.0	8.0
3	The curriculum of universities is effective in enhancing the cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills of master's graduates in translation.	20.0	19.0	6.0	45.0	10.0

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

Table 4 reveals that opinions on the effectiveness of the university curriculum for translation graduates are diverse. The data shows that approximately equal proportions of participants (48% agreement and 49% disagreement) were observed regarding the curriculum's ability to help students analyze source documents, recognize potential challenges in the text and cognition, and evaluate strategies and resources for proper reformulation based on communicative needs.

A majority of participants (67%) expressed the belief that translation graduates may struggle to assess the relevance and reliability of information sources for their translation needs, despite the knowledge acquired from the curriculum. In contrast, 57% of respondents agreed that the curriculum equips master's graduates in translation with the skills to obtain, enhance, and apply thematic and domain-specific knowledge that is relevant to translation requirements. However, a significant majority (76%) disagreed with the statement that students have the opportunity to translate general and domain-specific content from one or multiple source languages into their target language(s).

In terms of translation graduates' ability to analyze and justify their translation solutions using appropriate metalanguage and theoretical approaches, 58% of respondents found the curriculum helpful. However, a substantial majority (89%) held a negative view about the curriculum's effectiveness in enabling master's graduates to pre-edit source material to potentially improve the quality of machine translation output through appropriate pre-editing techniques. Similarly, 89% of participants disagreed with the usefulness of the university curriculum in enabling future

translation graduates to apply post-editing to machine translation output using the appropriate post-editing levels and techniques based on quality and productivity objectives.

Table 4. Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 4 to 10 (translation competence)

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA
		%	%	%	%	%
4	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to analyze a source document, identify potential textual and cognitive difficulties, and assess the strategies and resources needed for appropriate reformulation in line with communicative needs	8.0	40.0	3.0	43.0	6.0
5	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to evaluate the relevance and reliability of information sources about translation needs.	19.0	48.0	7.0	19.0	7.0
6	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to acquire, develop, and use thematic and domain-specific knowledge relevant to translation needs.	9.0	29.0	5.0	42.0	15.0
7	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to translate general and domain-specific material in one or several fields from one or several source languages into their target language(s),	16.0	60.0	-	20.0	3.0
8	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to analyze and justify their translation solutions and choices, using the appropriate metalanguage and applying appropriate theoretical approaches.	10.0	27.0	5.0	47.0	11.0
9	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to pre-edit source material to potentially improve MT output quality, using appropriate pre-editing techniques	24.0	65.0	-	10.0	1.0
10	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to apply post-editing to MT output using the appropriate post-editing levels and techniques according to the quality and productivity objectives.	7.0	82.0	6.0	3.0	3.0

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

Table 5 reveals a significant consensus among the respondents, with 93% expressing dissatisfaction with the curriculum's effectiveness in enhancing the proficiency of the future translation graduates in relevant IT applications, including various office software, and their ability to quickly adapt to new tools and IT resources. Similarly, a vast majority (97%) of participants indicated their belief that the curriculum falls short in empowering graduates to utilize search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools, and CAT tools. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (97%) shared the view that university curricula lack the necessary potency to equip the future translation graduates with the skills needed to effectively employ search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools, and CAT tools. Moreover, a substantial portion (83%) expressed skepticism regarding the curriculum's utility in enabling master's graduates in translation to utilize

other tools supporting language and translation technology, such as workflow management software.

Table 5. Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 11 to14 (technology competence)

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA
		%	%	%	%	%
11	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to use the most relevant IT applications, including the full range of office software, and adapt rapidly to new tools and IT resources.	33.0	60.0	2.0	5.0	-
12	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to make effective use of search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools, and CAT tools.	43.0	54.0	2.0	2.0	-
13	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to pre-process, process, and manage files and other media/sources as part of the translation, e.g. video and multimedia files.	39.0	58.0	2.0	2.0	-
14	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to apply other tools in support of language and translation technology, such as workflow management software.	38.0	45.0	-	17.0	-

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

According to the data presented in Table 6, a substantial majority of respondents (69%) expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum's effectiveness in assisting students in planning and managing their time, stress, and workload. Additionally, the curriculum was criticized for its inability to offer professional guidance to students working in teams, including virtual, multicultural, and multilingual environments, using contemporary communication technologies. This concern was shared by a significant majority of participants (96%). Furthermore, a prevailing sentiment among respondents (97%) was that university curricula do not adequately account for and enable the future translation graduates to adapt to the organizational and physical ergonomics of their working environment. However, it was noted that the curriculum does have the capacity to support translation students in continuously self-evaluating, updating, and developing their competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning. This perspective was endorsed by the majority of participants (92%).

Table 6. Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 15 to18 (personal and interpersonal competence)

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA
		%	%	%	%	%
15	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to plan and manage time, stress, and workload.	9.0	60.0	3.0	26.0	-
16	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to work in a team, including, where appropriate, in virtual, multicultural, and multilingual environments, using current communication technologies	19.0	77.0	2.0	2.0	-
17	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to take account of and adapt to the organizational and physical ergonomics of the working environment.	17.0	80.0	2.0	1.0	-
18	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to continuously self-evaluate, update, and develop competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning.	18.0	74.0	3.0	5.0	-

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

Table 7 highlights a unanimous consensus among respondents, with 100% agreement on the inadequacy of the curriculum in equipping the future translation graduates to recognize and respond to new societal and language industry demands, emerging market requirements, and evolving job profiles. Furthermore, 98% of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum's ability to guide students in approaching existing clients and acquiring new ones through effective prospecting and marketing strategies, as well as employing suitable written and oral communication techniques. A significant majority of respondents (94%) concurred that the curriculum falls short in helping students clearly define the requirements, objectives, and purposes of clients, recipients of language services, and other stakeholders, hindering their ability to provide appropriate services tailored to those needs.

Additionally, a significant number of participants (93%, 96%, and 92%) highlighted other weaknesses in university curricula. These weaknesses include deficiencies in organizing, budgeting, and managing translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers. There were also concerns about the curriculum's failure to instill an understanding of and adherence to standards relevant to language service provision, as well as its inability to ensure compliance with professional ethical codes and standards. Moreover,

participants expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum's limited ability to facilitate networking among translators and language providers through social media and professional associations.

Table 7. Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 19 to 24 (service provision competence)

Items		SD %	D %	DK %	A %	SA %
19	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to monitor and take account of new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements, and emerging job profiles.	27.0	72.0	-	-	-
20	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to approach existing clients and find new clients through prospecting and marketing strategies using the appropriate written and oral communication techniques.	15.0	83.0	2.0	-	-
21	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to clarify the requirements, objectives, and purposes of the client, recipients of the language service, and other stakeholders and offer the appropriate services to meet those requirements	29.0	65.0	4.0	3.0	-
22	The curriculum of translation universities enables master's graduates in translation to organize, budget, and manage translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers	15.0	78.0	4.0	2.0	-
23	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to understand and implement the standards applicable to the provision of a language service.	13.0	83.0	4.0	-	-
24	The curriculum of universities enables master's graduates in translation to comply with professional ethical codes and standards and network with other translators and language providers via social media and professional associations.	19.0	73.0	7.0	-	-

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree

Statistical analysis

The calculation of the total mean score for the evaluators' responses involved analyzing the descriptive statistics of the scores. In this context, mid-answers, denoted by 2.5, were considered the theoretical mean or median of the population. As the results indicated, the total mean score provided by the participants was 2.23. This information reflects the average rating given by the evaluators based on their responses.

Wilcoxon signed-rank test

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare the median total score provided by the participants with that of the population. The goal was to determine if the participants' agreement with the effectiveness of the universities' curriculum significantly differs from the theoretical mean. According to the results, the *p*-value of the test was .003, which is lower than the

significance level of .05 ($p < .05$). This suggests a statistically significant relationship between the participants' opinions and the curriculum's effectiveness. Additionally, the total mean score of 2.23 was lower than the theoretical mean of the population ($M < 2.5$). This indicates that the participants' assessment of the curriculum was lower than the expected average opinion, suggesting the curriculum was ineffective from the participants' perspective.

Discussion

The results suggest that the curriculum of Iranian universities improves graduates' *language and culture* competence to some extent. While this is seen as a strength, it is also noted that the curriculum's performance in this area is average, which is considered undesirable. The results of the study conducted by Asiri and Metwally (2020) approves that incompetent students culturally or linguistically tend to provide peculiar translations that can lead to linguistic mistakes in grammar or structure or word choice and the quality of the translation negatively.

In the same context, Solovyeva, et al (2015) argue that the level of *language and culture competence* will allow translators/interpreters to successfully and flexibly adapt to the modern multicultural world, integrate into the national and world culture, build willingness and ability to take part in an intercultural dialogue. This is because of that *Language and culture* competence is a crucial skill that every translator must possess, as it allows them to achieve successful translations by understanding the cultural nuances in both the source and target languages, as emphasized by Nord (2005).

In addition, the results indicate that the curriculum's performance in training translation graduates in *translation* competence is also average. The findings of Nakhli's (2021) study confirms that adequate curriculum can provide master's graduates in translation with the necessary translation skill because this competence is *the ability to know how to translate* (Hurtado, 1996). Alshargabi and Al-Mekhlafi (2019), who focused on *translation* competence as an effective tool in fulfilling the market needs of translators, emphasizes the importance of consistent coordination between translation programs and the evolving demands of the job market. Therefore, it is crucial to effectively incorporate this competence into the curriculum, as it can play a decisive role in the employability of master's degree graduates.

The previous two competencies primarily focus on practical knowledge and skills that enhance the qualifications of translators. In contrast, *technology* competency represents technical knowledge that significantly impacts the employability of translators. This competency is considered optional and not universally possessed by all translators. Unfortunately, the curriculum lacks courses related to translation technologies and recent developments in this area, which poses significant challenges for M.A. graduates. Their familiarity with technological tools, such as information and communication technology (ICT) tools and CAT tools, is limited to general-purpose applications like word processing software and online dictionaries.

In line with this observation, studies conducted by Abdi (2021; 2022) investigated the extent to which students are familiar with ICT tools and their knowledge of CAT tools used to support both ICT and CAT-related activities within the translator's workstation. The findings indicated that future translation graduates demonstrated strong familiarity with general-purpose software applications but had below-average familiarity with specialized software. This trend was also evident in their proficiency with CAT tools, suggesting a deep understanding of general tools but a limited grasp of specific applications.

Courses related to the improvement of *personal and interpersonal* competence were neglected and not included in the curriculum, as indicated by the results. It is intriguing that the study conducted by Motiejūnienė and Kasperavičienė (2018) found that personal competences, such as adaptability, creativity, self-control, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence, were not considered the most crucial factors for translation project management. Similar to *technology* competence, *personal and interpersonal* competence and courses related to them may not be as crucial, but they can be beneficial for translators by enhancing their adaptability and employability.

Biloveský's (2023) study emphasized that *interpersonal* competence enables students to adapt and improve their skills in response to the changing demands of the 21st-century translation market. Disregarding this competence denies students critical skills that could profoundly shape their future career paths.

Service provision competence, the last competence discussed, is more beneficial for freelance translators compared to in-house translators. This is because *service provision* competence deals with clients, stakeholders, and activities related to freelancers who often handle all translation activities independently, as noted by Abdi (2019). NAATI (2016) clarifies that *service provision*

competence enables translators to enhance their knowledge of business and improve skills related to communication and interpersonal interactions.

This subject matter was examined by Klimkowska and Klimkowska (2020). According to the results, a vast majority of respondents showed a strong interest in starting their own business, highlighting the importance of *service provision* competence and the way students perceive themselves as entrepreneurial translators. The authors concluded that translation courses should aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the professional role of a translator, and recommended that translation curricula designers and teachers take this into consideration. It is disappointing to note that the curriculum of Iranian universities does not provide students with the opportunity to develop their *service provision* competence, limiting their chances of maximizing employability, as indicated by the results.

Conclusion

Curriculum evaluation, as Striven (1974) states, involves judgment and serves as a process for determining the quality or value of a curriculum. A quality curriculum is designed to meet the needs of translation graduates and align with the demands of the market in which they are expected to compete. The aim of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in Iranian universities in improving master's graduates' competencies and improving their employability.

The results of the study showed that the curriculum enables master's graduates in translation to expand their language and cultural skills in addition to their translation skills. However, it was found that the translation training programs did not support graduates in developing other essential competences, including *technology* competence, *personal and interpersonal* competence, and *service provision* competence. These competences, considered by the EMT Network (2017) to be crucial for adaptability and employability, have not been adequately addressed in the curriculum, indicating a gap in the promotion of the desired competences outlined in the EMT Network.

The results of the study were in contrast to Sharif's (2016) study as the author concluded that the current English translation curriculum can help master's students acquire the necessary skills. There was also a similar contrast between this study and that of Songserm et al. (2018) conducted. The results showed clear objectives in the curriculum and its relevant structure, including titles

and objectives. In addition, the subjects in the curriculum were considered acceptable and appropriately arranged in the educational plan.

The results of the current study were consistent with the study conducted by Samir (2022). The results of the author's study showed that the curriculum for master's student needs adjustment. The results of this study also have some similarities with the study by Kaveh and Karimnia (2015). According to the participants, the materials of the translation programs need a major revision and some related issues should be addressed in the syllabus.

In conclusion, the design of translation training programs in Iranian universities appears to be insufficient to promote the full range of competences highlighted by the EMT network for M.A. graduates. The study suggests that there is room for improvement in targeting the curriculum to develop skills and improve employability. The results provide valuable insights for curriculum designers and the study concludes with recommendations to address these gaps and improve the effectiveness of translation training programs.

Curriculum content should be of utmost importance to curriculum designers as it plays a pivotal role in improving M.A. graduates' competences in translation. Designers should prioritize the inclusion in the curriculum of elements aimed at improving the qualifications of graduates. Obtaining input from experienced teachers and consulting with professional translators can provide valuable insight into students' developmental needs.

In addition, a focus should be placed on essential competences such as *language and culture* competence, *translation* competence, and *technology* competence as they have a significant impact on graduates' employability. This does not mean that other competences such as *personal and interpersonal* competence and *service provision* competence are neglected, but rather emphasizes the importance of practical application over theoretical knowledge. It is recommended that designers emphasize the practical aspects of competences because competences are developed more effectively through practical practice.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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