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Establishing Interpreter Training Discipline in the Iranian Higher Education

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Abstract

Despite the fact that interpreting has long existed in history and predates translation, interpreter training as an autonomous discipline is non-existent at the graduate level in Iran. The paramount focus of this study was to probe into the status quo of interpreting courses in Iranian academia and subsequently delve into the possible expediencies to establishing such a discipline in higher education. To this end, 15 professional interpreters (9 from Iran and 6 from other countries), 10 interpreter trainers (4 from Iran and 6 from other countries), and 118 English Translation Studies students (32 M.A. and 86 B.A.) who were selected through convenience sampling participated in this study. The students filled out a 20-item researchers-designed Likert-scale interpreting status quo questionnaire and the interpreter trainers and interpreters were invited for a formal semi-structured interview. Findings, analyzed quantitatively by SPSS software version 28 and qualitatively by inductive codification process, revealed the existing situation of the interpreting courses in the Iranian academia in terms of needs analysis, objectives and syllabus, methodology, materials as well as course contents and ensured the significance of establishing interpreter training as an independent discipline in the higher education among all stakeholders, i.e. interpreters, interpreter trainers (teachers) and interpreter trainees (students) for a number of expediencies including non-existence of this discipline in Iran, the need for academization, its multidisciplinary nature, dearth of specialization, addressing stakeholders and researchability, generating pertinent activities, glocal reputation, and employability.

Keywords: interpreting studies, interpreter training, interpreter training discipline.

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1. Introduction

Although interpreting antedates translation, it was only in the late twentieth century that "interpreting studies" as an academic field emerged. In the 1970s, a group of scholars interested in interpreting founded a relevant community. It was probably during Trieste symposium in 1986 and later in the early 1990s in a scholarly paper that for the first time "interpreting studies" as an academic, disciplinary label, analogous to translation studies, was used (Salevsky, 1993). The nomenclature of the field has been settled, however, the nature of the discipline remains a highly debatable issue.

There are two fundamental perspectives concerning the nature of interpreting studies. The first one, as proposed by Holmes (1972/2000) and further developed by Toury (1995), encompasses all forms of translational activity including interpreting. The other one, as suggested by Shlesinger in 1995, taxonomizes interpreting studies as a (sub) discipline emphasizing its potential to be developed more autonomously. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are transparent distinctions between interpreting and translation studies that further clarify the multifaceted, multi perspectival essence of interpreting to be labeled autonomously as interpreting studies (Pochhacker, 2016).

By the same token, on the basis of new methodological consensus promoted by Gile (1990), researchers used a variety of cognitive approaches to investigate different aspects of interpreting processes paving the way for cognitive process (CP) paradigm which set itself apart from the Paris School. Furthermore, it was in 1996 that the first international peer-reviewed journal named International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting was published by 'John Benjamins' to solely reflect the interpreting issues. Similarly, the first Critical Link Conference on "Interpreters in the Community" (Carr et al. 1997) marks the emergence of community interpreting.

In the Iranian academic setting, at the level of graduate, interpreting is mostly viewed as a sub-discipline of translation studies and not yet as an autonomous discipline. Hence, as a part of translation studies discipline, at the M.A. level only 2 elective credits and also at the Ph.D. level 6 required credits, (provided that the student's dissertation is about interpreting-related issues) namely, Interpreting Theories, Research Methods in Interpreting and Interpreting Training Methodology are offered (https://www.msrt.ir). Therefore, it seems to be high time that the Iranian academia considered interpreting as an independent discipline at the

graduate level.

Moreover, on the basis of globalization processes, the need for competent interpreters is a sine qua non for facilitating more effective communication between two parties with different languages. Therefore, the call for a more collectively academic notion of interpreter training education, as a less talked-of tenet and a fast-developing discipline, has arisen. Concordantly, the study's uppermost focus is to scrutinize the status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia and explore the rationales for the establishment of interpreter training discipline in the higher education.

Research Questions

The present study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia?

2. Is there any expediency for interpreting studies to be introduced as an autonomous discipline? If yes, Why?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Interpreter Training

There are hundreds of courses and programs being offered globally when it comes to interpreter training ranging from short non-degree courses planned for continuing education, undergraduate programs to acquaint students with basic knowledge and skills for interpreting, to graduate level programs that systematically train professional interpreters. Despite the fact that all these courses and programs aim to help students become qualified interpreters or improve interpreting skills, the level, duration and objectives of the training could vary depending on the needs of participants. Another point to be taken into account is the emergence of a large number of interpreter training at the level of master's degree throughout the world over the past few decades due to the fact that most people view formal training at the graduate level as the best way to become a competent interpreter (Bao, 2012)

Professional interpreter training in the world is being offered at the graduate level in both conference and non-conference settings as well as in degree and non-degree programs, however, it is mostly provided in the form of M.A. programs that last for two years. In the state of conference interpreting, AIIC (International

Association of Conference Interpreters) has developed criteria for best practices, including the level, length, courses and exams which may be used as the guidelines in order to select the schools or programs for training. Similar guidance has also been given in the core curriculum of the EMCI (European Masters in Conference Interpreting). In China also, the National Committee has developed guidelines for the Masters programs in broad categories of interpreting settings. The United Nations and the European Union, as the main employers of interpreters, have demanded for high quality training of conference interpreters through their cooperation and collaboration with universities and colleges (Bao, 2012)

As Gile (1995) posits, interpreter training is useful in achieving three objectives. First, it aids practitioners reach their complete potential, second, it helps the future interpreter learn the required skills in an efficient way, and last, it helps elevate the standards of interpreting profession.

Interpreter training has two levels. The first is, what Gile (1995) called, 'initial training for newcomers', and Hale (2007) 'pre-service training' respectively, which refers to the necessary training that qualifies interpreter trainees to get into the profession. The second is the training required to improve the practitioner's standards while practicing which is technically referred to as on-the-job training. The first is known by its length and is, therefore, costlier, which makes optimization critical. Baker (1992) believes that training is performed in two ways in any given profession, namely, vocational training, which deals with the practical skills needed for the profession; and academic training, which provides a solid theoretical background to teaching the skills. González Davies (2005) considers another factor in ramifying training of the interpreter. In his perspective, the level of the training program is either undergraduate or postgraduate, and each of which has its own considerations and mandates.

2.2. The Evolution of Interpreter Training

As Pochhacker (2004) declares interpreting is a relatively young discipline and the courses for the development of interpreting-specific skills date back as early as the 20th century. It is a truism that in comparison to other professional training like music and sports, interpreter training begins fairly late in life, for instance, when learners are in their twenties. Interpreter trainees have already built up their language skills by this age, therefore, the significance of interpreter training lies in

switching interpreting learners' existing language skills to befit the needs of consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting modes (Ericsson, 2000). The first-generation interpreter trainers established an enduring method of training by apprenticeship, in which the technical and professional knowledge is transferred from trainers to trainees, mainly through simulated exercises on real-life tasks (Pochhacker, 2004). The apprenticeship approach was introduced later as the 'training paradigm' by Mackintosh (1995). During the 1980s, a more scientific approach was demanded interpreter training. The cognitive approach has affected the training of interpreters in various skills, introducing aspects including component skills (Lambert, 1988), strategies (Riccardi, 1996), processing capacity management (Gile, 1995), and the development of expertise (Moser-Mercer, 2000). The latest evolution of modern interpreter training lies in what Sawyer (2004, p.93) proposed, "a humanistic approach to include the social and personal aspects of instructional interaction and the process of socializing students into a community of professional practice". Therefore, the evolution of interpreter training paradigms in the 20th century has led to a more interaction-based and student-oriented approach (Pochhacker, 2004).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Three types of participants took part in this study, namely students, interpreters, and interpreter trainers. The university students who participated in this research, all were studying at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. Since it is normally impossible to randomize a large number of students in university settings and to increase manageability, the researchers adopted a convenience method of sampling. The descriptive demographical information of participants is tabulated as follow.

Table 1
Demography of Students

Level	Major	Gender		N
		Female	Male	
B.A.	English Translation	53	33	86
M.A.	English Translation	23	9	32

The interpreters who contributed to conducting this study were of two types, conference and non-conference interpreters. As for the certification, except for two female interpreters (Iran and Kosovo) who were autodidacts, others were trained as interpreters by passing certain courses in accredited interpreter training universities or centers and granted performance-based certificates.

Table 2
Demography of Interpreters

No.	Nationality	Gender		Interpreting Experience	Age
		Female	Male		
1.	Iran	●		11	45
2.	Iran	●		14	51
3.	Iran	●		9	36
4.	Iran	●		5	32
5.	Iran		●	21	53
6.	Iran		●	17	48
7.	Iran		●	19	39
8.	Iran		●	4	28
9.	Iran		●	11	33
10.	Germany	●		23	54
11.	Belgium		●	22	51
12.	Kosovo	●		28	52
13.	Luxembourg	●		30	68
14.	Croatia	●		35	73
15.	Italy		●	18	45

The third group who took part in this study were interpreter trainers who taught in a variety of settings ranging from short non-degree courses to undergraduate and graduate level programs as well as complimentary certificate programs for job preparation.

Table 3
Demography of Interpreter Trainers

No.	Nationality	Gender		Teaching Experience	Age
		Female	Male		
1.	Iran	●		15	42
2.	Iran	●		10	46
3.	Iran		●	20	50
4.	Iran		●	9	40
5.	France		●	16	59
6.	Italy		●	21	65
7.	Spain	●		15	49
8.	England	●		10	42
9.	Austria		●	16	56
10.	Canada		●	18	59

3.3. Instrumentation

The researchers, striving to portray the phenomena as holistically as possible, adopted a mixed-methods research approach in hopes of fathoming the complicated essence of interpreting and interpreter training and employed the questionnaire and interview as the measurement instruments as comes below.

3.3.1. Interview

The interviewees in this study were of two types, namely, interpreter trainers and interpreters. The interview consisted of 5 questions which were asked to probe the possible expediencies and rationale for the establishment of interpreter training discipline in the Iranian higher education. The researchers reviewed the related literature in order to gain some insights into the nature and types of questions. The interview questions were derived from an initial pool of 10 questions written by the researchers with the consultation of the two interpreters and two interpreter trainers (expert validation). Firstly, the questions were piloted with two participants, one interpreter and one interpreter trainer. Consequently, based on the results obtained,

the questions were modified and finalized to be administered, audio-recorded and transcribed. The number of interviewees and types of interviews are as follow.

(1) 10 interpreter trainers (teachers) were interviewed in-depth (formal semi-structured).

(2) 15 national and international interpreters were invited for the interviews whether in-person or web-based (formal semi-structured).

3.3.2. Questionnaire

In a bid to develop the required questionnaire, firstly, the literature was studied in order to extract the aspects of the target construct. Secondly, for the purpose of both triangulation and cross-content assurance, some insights were obtained from the interview as mentioned. The combination of the ideas led to developing a set of items which ultimately shaped the cornerstone of a 20-item researchers-designed Likert-scale questionnaire, ranging from totally disagree to totally agree, to scrutinize the status quo of interpreting courses in Iran. It was derived out of 30 questions developed by the researchers from the extracted themes of the interview and reviewed by the experts, i.e. two professional interpreters and two interpreter trainers (expert validation).

In addition to cross-content and expert-consulted validation, another additional, though not much necessary, statistical step was also taken. It means that initially, the questionnaire was piloted in a class with 30 students and then on the basis of obtained findings, it was modified and finalized. Accordingly, for the validation process, the Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the questionnaire was .86 which can be considered as appropriate (Table 4). Moreover, a factor analysis through the varimax rotation was run to probe the underlying constructs of the 20 items of the questionnaire to measure construct validity (Table 5). Despite some type of unclear pattern, the extracted factors are by themselves some indications of the validity of the target variable.

Finally, the questionnaire consisting of five main themes, namely Needs Analysis, Objectives and Syllabus, Methodology, Materials, and Content was administered among 32 M.A. and 86 B.A. English Translation students.

Table 4

Reliability Statistics of Questionnaire

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Questionnaire	.86	20

Table 5

Rotated Component Matrix Questionnaire

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item9	.639	.325	.310				
Item6	.626						
Item1	-.602						
Item7	.602			.385			
Item10	.533		.464				
Item15		.732					
Item13		.725	.383				
Item8		.570					.382
Item18		-.500	-.318		.306		
Item3		.426					
Item14			.678				.310
Item4			.626				
Item5			.618				-.329
Item19		-.379	-.434	.329	.333		
Item2				.761			
Item20				.615		-.385	
Item12					.806		
Item11	.355				.762		
Item17						.778	
Item16							.796

3.4. Procedure

What comes below is the granularity of acquiring data in this study. As research is an orderly and systematic process, the procedure herein can be presented sequentially from the first step of problematization through the final step of conclusion. However, it is also imperative to understand that the research process is essentially circular in the sense that each preceding and succeeding step feeds on each other.

1. The 20-item researchers-designed questionnaire was piloted and validated.

2. Interpreter students both M.A. and B.A. (Table 1) were to fill out a 20- item researchers-designed Likert-scale questionnaire at the end of the university semester.

3. The 5 interview questions were piloted and validated.

4. 15 national and international interpreters (Table 2) were invited for the interviews whether in-person (7 cases), telephone conversation (2 cases) or web-based (6 cases) in a formal semi-structured format.

5. 10 interpreter trainers (Table 3) were interviewed in-depth in a formal semi-structured model. Three of the participants were interviewed face-to-face, one telephone conversation and six web-based.

6. The interviews with 10 interpreter trainers and 15 interpreters were audio-recorded and meticulously transcribed. To increase the reliability, the transcriptions were rechecked by the researchers to avoid mistakes.

7. Themes were extracted and codes were labeled.

8. Codes were both inter-rated and intra-rated (2 cases).

9. The correlation among data-driven coded themes suggest high reliability.

4. Results

The results obtained from the questionnaire answered the first research question and the data-driven codes obtained from the interviews addressed the second research question as follow.

4.1. Investigating Research Question Number One

The first research question was the status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia. To answer this question, the researchers distributed a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire to 118 interpreter trainees (32 M.A. & 86 B.A.) as the ethnography of the Islamic Azad University-South Tehran Branch. The results are shown as follow.

Table 4 to Table 8 display the frequencies and percentages for the students' attitude towards the status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia in terms of needs analysis, objectives and syllabus, methodology, materials and content. The results are discussed on five sub-sets below.

4.1.1. Students' Attitude towards Needs Analysis

The results displayed in Table 6 indicated that 99.2 percent of respondents totally agreed (68.6 %) and agreed (30.5 %) with the idea that interpreter training courses

should be established in higher education, while .8 percent were neutral. The results also showed that 29.7 percent totally disagreed and 50 percent disagreed with the idea that current interpreting courses met the needs of the students; while 5.9 percent; i.e. 5.1 agree plus .8 totally agree, held the opposite view, and 14.4 percent of respondents were neutral. And finally, 22.9 % totally disagree and 49.2 % disagreed with the idea that the current interpreting credit of six was sufficient. On the other hand, 5.9 percent (5.1 % agree plus .8 % totally agree) held the opposite view, and 22 percent were neutral. Table 6 displays the percentages discussed above.

Table 6
Frequencies and Percentages of Items Related to Needs Analysis

		Choices					Total
		Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
To establish interpreter training in higher education	Freq.	0	0	1	36	81	118
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	30.5%	68.6%	100.0%
Current courses meet the needs of trainees	Freq.	35	59	17	6	1	118
	%	29.7%	50.0%	14.4%	5.1%	0.8%	100.0%
Current interpreting credits of 6 is sufficient	Freq.	27	58	26	6	1	118
	%	22.9%	49.2%	22.0%	5.1%	0.8%	100.0%
Total	Freq.	62	117	44	48	83	354
	%	17.5%	33.1%	12.4%	13.6%	23.4%	100.0%

Figure 1
Percentages of Items Related to Needs Analysis
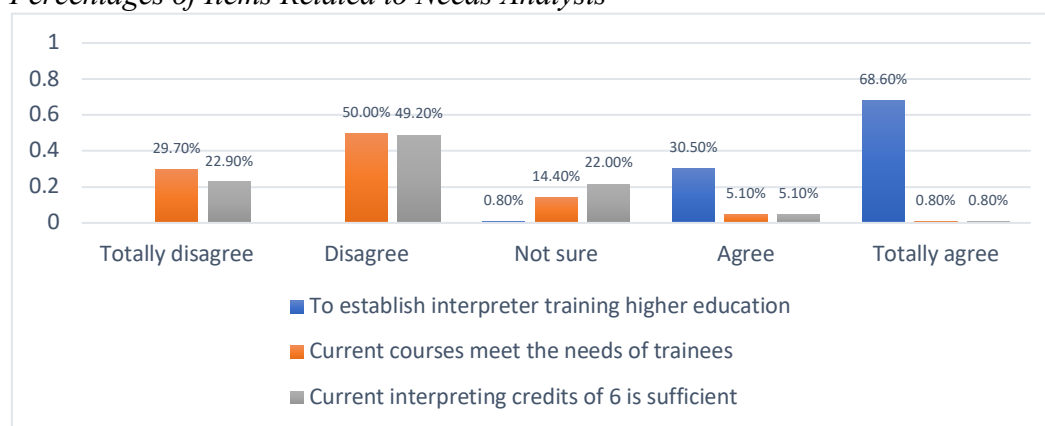
4.1.2. Students' Attitude towards Objectives

Majority of the students; i.e. 22.9 % totally disagree plus 39 % disagree, believed that the objectives were neither clear nor attainable. On the other hand, 10.1 percent of respondents; i.e. 9.3 % agree plus .8 total agree, heled the opposite view. That is to say, they believed that the objectives were clear and attainable.

Moreover, 72.9 percent of students; i.e. 30.5 % totally disagree plus 42.4 % disagree believed that there was not any consensus among interpreter trainers in terms of syllabus of teaching interpreting; while 4.2 percent (3.4 % agree plus .8 % totally agree) held the opposite view, and 22.9 percent were neutral.
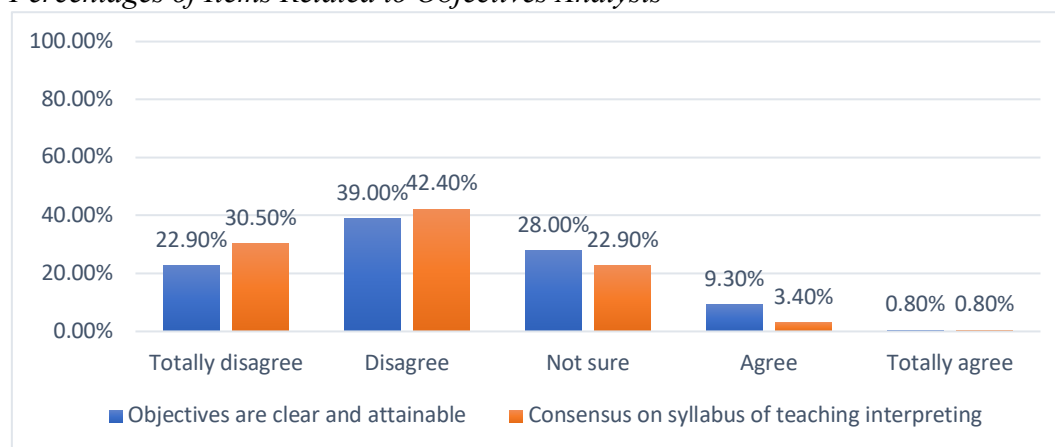
Table 7
Frequencies and Percentages of Items Related to Objectives and Syllabus

		Choices					
		Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	Total
Objectives are clear and attainable	Freq.	27	46	33	11	1	118
	%	22.9%	39.0%	28.0%	9.3%	0.8%	100.0%
Consensus on syllabus of teaching interpreting	Freq.	36	50	27	4	1	118
	%	30.5%	42.4%	22.9%	3.4%	0.8%	100.0%
Total	Freq.	63	96	60	15	2	236
	%	26.7%	40.7%	25.4%	6.4%	0.8%	100.0%

Figure 2
Percentages of Items Related to Objectives Analysis

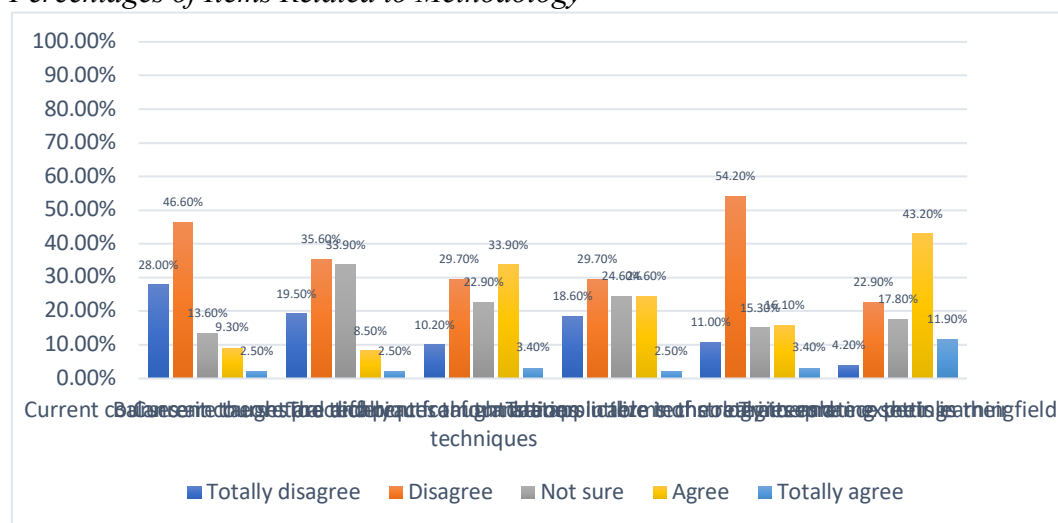### 4.1.3. Students' Attitude towards Methodology

Table 8 displays the frequencies and percentages related to the students' attitude towards methodology. The results (Table 8) showed that majority of the students totally disagreed 28 percent plus 46.6 percent disagreed with the idea that the current interpreting courses were taught mostly in practical ways. On the other hand, 11.8 percent (9.3 % agree plus 2.5 % totally agree) held the opposite view. They believed that that the current interpreting courses were taught mostly in practical ways; and another 13.6 percent were neutral. The results also showed that 55.1 percent of the students; i.e. 19.5 % totally disagree plus 35.6 % disagree, believed that there was not any balance in theoretical and practical foundations in interpreting classes; while 11 percent (8.5 % agree + 2.5 % totally agree) held the opposite view, and another 33.9 percent of respondents held a neutral position. The results also indicated that 33.9 percent agreed plus 3.4 percent totally agreed with the idea that the current interpreting courses were quite different from translation ones in terms of strategies and techniques. On the other hand; 10.2 % totally disagree plus 29.7 % disagree, believed that the current interpreting courses were not different from translation ones in terms of strategies and techniques; and another 22.9 percent were neutral.

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of Items Related to Methodology

		Choices					
		Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	Total
Current courses are taught practically	Freq.	33	55	16	11	3	118
	%	28.0%	46.6%	13.6%	9.3%	2.5%	100.0%
Balance in theoretical and practical foundations	Freq.	23	42	40	10	3	118
	%	19.5%	35.6%	33.9%	8.5%	2.5%	100.0%
Current courses are different from translation in terms of strategies and techniques	Freq.	12	35	27	40	4	118
	%	10.2%	29.7%	22.9%	33.9%	3.4%	100.0%
The techniques taught are applicable in the real interpreting settings	Freq.	22	35	29	29	3	118
	%	18.6%	29.7%	24.6%	24.6%	2.5%	100.0%
Trainers utilize technology to enhance the level of learning	Freq.	13	64	18	19	4	118
	%	11.0%	54.2%	15.3%	16.1%	3.4%	100.0%
Trainers are experts in interpreting field	Freq.	5	27	21	51	14	118
	%	4.2%	22.9%	17.8%	43.2%	11.9%	100.0%
Total	Freq.	108	258	151	160	31	708
	%	15.3%	36.4%	21.3%	22.6%	4.4%	100.0%

Regarding the techniques taught in the current interpreting courses, 18.6 percent totally disagreed and 29.7 percent disagreed with the idea that they were applicable in the real interpreting settings; while 24.6 percent of the respondents were neutral; and 27.1 percent (24.6 % agree plus 2.5 % totally agree) held the opposite view. The results also showed that all students disagreed (11 % totally disagree plus 54.2 % disagree) believed that the interpreter trainers did not utilize technology to enhance the level of learning, while 19.5 percent; i.e. 16.1 % agree plus 3.4 % totally agree, held the opposite view, and 15.3 percent were neutral. And finally, 55.1 percent of students; i.e. 43.2 percent agree plus 11.9 percent totally agree, believed that the interpreter trainers were experts in the interpreting field, while 17.8 percent of respondents were neutral; and 27.3 percent (4.2 % totally disagree plus 22.9 % disagree) held the opposite view; i.e. the interpreter trainers were not experts in the interpreting field.

Figure 3
Percentages of Items Related to Methodology

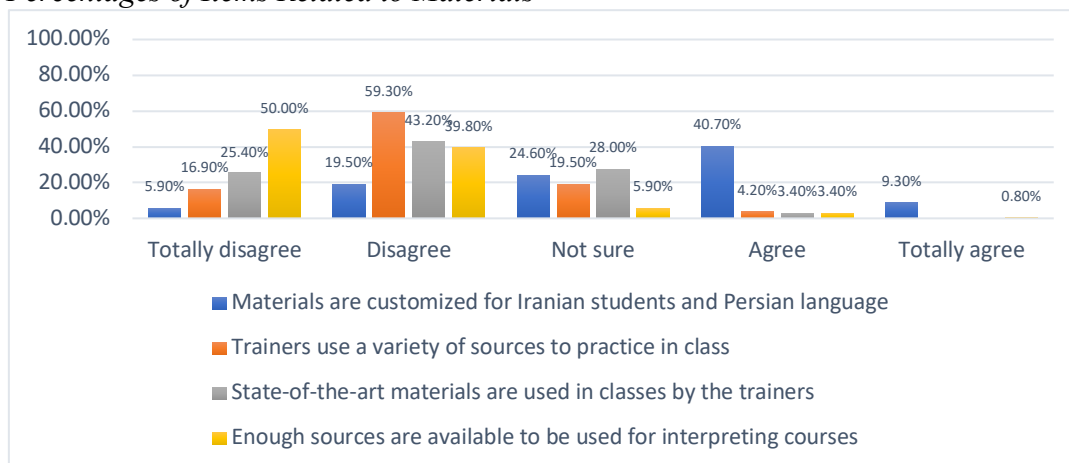### 4.1.4. Students' Attitude towards Materials

The fourth section explored the students' attitude towards the materials and resources. The results (Table 9) showed that majority of the students; i.e. 40.7 % agree plus 9.3 % totally agree, believed that the current materials were customized for Iranian students and Persian language, while 25.4 percent (5.9 % totally disagree plus 19.5 % disagree) held the opposite view; and another 24.6 percent were not sure about this

issue. Majority of the students; i.e. 16.9 % totally disagree plus 59.3 % disagree, believed that the trainers did not use a variety of sources (books, handouts, clips, etc.) to practice interpreting in class. Another 19.5 percent were neutral, and only 4.2 percent agreed with the idea that trainers used variety of resources to practice interpreting. The results also showed majority of the students; i.e. 25.4 % totally disagree plus 43.2 % disagree, with the idea that the state-of-the-art materials were used in interpreting classes by the trainers; while 28 percent were neutral and only 3.4 percent agreed with the idea that the state-of-the-art materials were used in interpreting classes. And finally; 89.8 percent students; i.e. 50 % totally disagreed plus 39.8 %, believed that there were not enough sources available in the market which were also used for interpreting courses; while 5.9 percent were neutral and only 4.2 (3.4 % agree plus .8 % totally agree) percent held the opposite view.

Table 9
Frequencies and Percentages of Items Related to Materials

		Choices					Total
		Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Materials are customized for Iranian students and Persian language	Freq.	7	23	29	48	11	118
	%	5.9%	19.5%	24.6%	40.7%	9.3%	100.0%
Trainers use a variety of sources to practice in class	Freq.	20	70	23	5	0	118
	%	16.9%	59.3%	19.5%	4.2%	0.0%	100.0%
State-of-the-art materials are used in classes by the trainers	Freq.	30	51	33	4	0	118
	%	25.4%	43.2%	28.0%	3.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Enough sources are available to be used for interpreting courses	Freq.	59	47	7	4	1	118
	%	50.0%	39.8%	5.9%	3.4%	0.8%	100.0%
Total	Freq.	116	191	92	61	12	472
	%	24.6%	40.5%	19.5%	12.9%	2.5%	100.0%

Figure 4
Percentages of Items Related to Materials

## 4.1.5. Students' Attitude towards Content

Based on the results displayed in Table 10 it can be concluded that majority of the students; i.e. 13.6 % total disagree plus 38.1 % disagree, believed that the interpreting courses did not meet their expectations for the quality of the courses content; another 22.9 percent were neutral, while more than 25 percent (23.7 % agree plus 1.7 % totally agree) held the opposite view. Majority of the students; i.e. 19.5 % totally disagree plus 36.4 % disagree, believed that the course contents were not in accord with the facilities of Iranian universities. Another 21.2 percent were neutral, and 22.9 percent; i.e. 19.5 % agree plus 3.4 % totally agree, believed that the course contents were in accord with the facilities of Iranian universities. The results also showed that 52.5 percent of students; i.e. 44.9 percent agreed and 7.6 percent totally agreed with the idea that the assigned tasks to do in and outside the class were performance-based, while 19.5 percent were neutral; and 27.8 percent (4.2 % totally disagree plus 23.7 % disagree) held the opposite view. Majority of the students (38.1 % agree plus 33.1 % totally agree), believed that the projects assigned by the interpreter trainers were learning-oriented, while 11.9 percent (1.7 % totally disagree plus 10.2 % disagree) believed that the assigned projects were not learning-oriented; and another 16.9 percent were neutral. And finally; 17.8 percent of students totally disagreed and 50.9 percent disagreed with the idea that the examinations focused on the nature of interpreting skills and competences, i.e. mostly oral-based. Another 17.8 percent were neutral, and 8.4 percent (7.6 % agree

plus .8 % totally agree) held the opposite view.

Table 10
Frequencies and Percentages of Items Related to Content

		Choices					Total
		Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Quality of the content of courses meet students' expectations	Freq.	16	45	27	28	2	118
	%	13.6%	38.1%	22.9%	23.7%	1.7%	100.0%
Contents are in accord with the facilities of Iranian universities	Freq.	23	43	25	23	4	118
	%	19.5%	36.4%	21.2%	19.5%	3.4%	100.0%
Tasks assigned to do in and outside the class are performance-based	Freq.	5	28	23	53	9	118
	%	4.2%	23.7%	19.5%	44.9%	7.6%	100.0%
The projects assigned by trainers are learning-oriented	Freq.	2	12	20	45	39	118
	%	1.7%	10.2%	16.9%	38.1%	33.1%	100.0%
Examinations focus on nature of skills and competences	Freq.	21	66	21	9	1	118
	%	17.8%	55.9%	17.8%	7.6%	0.8%	100.0%
Total	Freq.	67	194	116	158	55	590
	%	11.4%	32.9%	19.7%	26.8%	9.3%	100.0%

Figure 5
Percentages of Items Related to Content
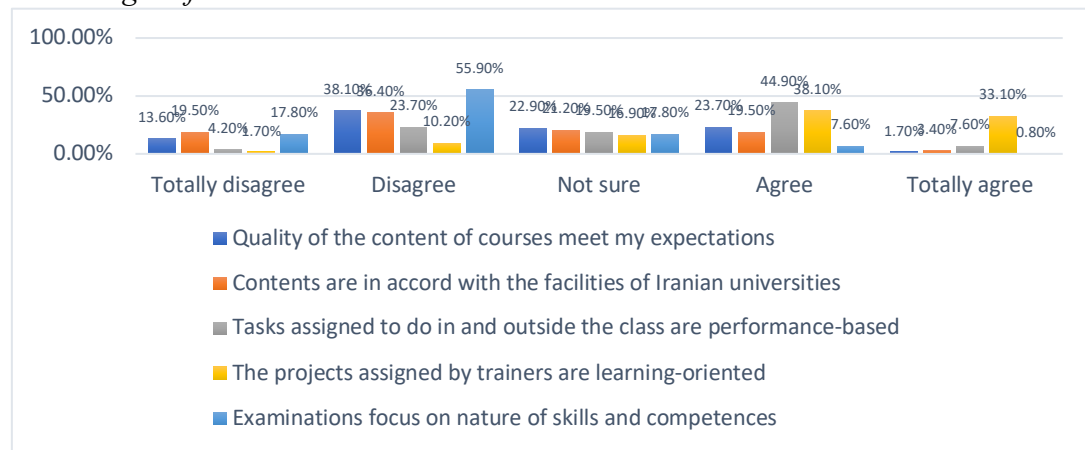
4.2. Codification Process

The researchers utilized a systemic approach to coding the data derived from the interview with the interpreters and interpreter trainers. Coding can be defined as the analytical process through which data is fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this process, the researchers made use of

inductive coding i.e. to fathom the codes developed from raw data derived from the interview. In doing so, first, the researchers have meticulously transcribed and categorize the themes and then codified the language-driven data i.e. they symbolically assigned a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute to them. In order to wear the analytic lens and heighten the codification reliability the extracted themes were both inter-rated and intra-rated (2 cases) to reach unanimous agreement upon theme-driven codes.

4.3. Investigating Research Question Number Two

The second research question addressed whether there is any expediency for interpreter training to be introduced as an autonomous discipline in the higher education in Iran and the reasons for that.

What comes next is the list of expediencies for the establishment of interpreter training as an independent discipline in the Iranian higher education extracted and coded from the obtained data via the interview conducted in this study. Following the coded themes come some samples of original data for the sake of enriched credibility and reliability.

4.3.1. Non-existence

Although interpreting roots in history and has firmly established itself as a full-fledged discipline separate from translation, its re-emergence in the contemporaneous era, in terms of training, dates back to at least the world war II in the world, it is lagging behind in Iran in the higher education. Therefore, the establishment of interpreter training as an independent discipline is a sine qua non for training skilled interpreters which is still in its infancy in the Iranian academic settings.

Participant 1: It's really **necessary** having interpreting as an independent discipline. It's a whole new world with different strategies for doing the job accurately. It's abundantly challenging and also requires ability to master such skill. Unfortunately, in Iran **we don't have this discipline** while in the world **we have it from Nuremberg Trial after world war two**. In order to have **professional and trained interpreters** we should have this discipline in our universities.

Participant 2: I think interpreting is an exciting major and there is a lot of job

potential for it in our country and if students could study it professionally in their next stages of education it will be great. But **there is no such major at M.A. level** above to study and I think this is the reason we **don't have enough skilled interpreters** in different fields in our country in comparison with other countries.

4.3.2. Academization

The academization of interpreter training is a prerequisite to training interpreters and educating interpreter trainers most of whom, to date, teach intuitively rather than scientifically as well as developing curriculum and related materials and designing examination protocols. Moreover, it is to aid interpreting trainees to enhance their interpreting skills more swiftly than through field experience and self-instruction.

Autodidacticism, certainly, involves much groping the way blindly through the, metaphorically speaking, interpreting terra incognita and learning by trial-and-error process. Therefore, to academize the interpreter training may ameliorate the chaotic, discipline-neutral, spontaneous, syllabus-free and untrained trainers, to name just a few, status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia.

Participant 1: It is **required** due to the fact that a person who is interested in interpreting shouldn't **waste their time in translation and teaching**. Also many teachers teach **based on feelings** and they **don't** follow a special **scientific method of teaching** and **assessment**. So the situation of interpreting in Iran is that there is **no fixed syllabus** for interpreting and the **teachers** are the teachers of translation and teaching **not interpreting**.

Participant 2: It is really **applicable to have an academic environment for interpreting courses**, but since there is a **lack of satisfactory educational setting**, and **not adequate knowledgeable teachers**, **no** one has enough knowledge to **teach in this field professionally**. I think most of the interpreters **learn this by themselves**, for example by **experience** which is very hard.

4.3.3. Multidisciplinarity

The multidisciplinarity of interpreting makes the establishment of interpreter training discipline in the higher education quintessential. It was publically

announced by officials in the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology as well as the Islamic Azad University's Board of Trustees to eliminate the majors with no or the limited number of students that has no economic justification as well as to establish new majors on the basis of needs analysis in the country to, more than ever, converge knowledge and profession and solve the unemployment crisis of graduate students.

The elimination of majors and therefore the paucity of classes and the closure of colleges have serious repercussions on the future of professors of whom some are faculty members. This holds true both inside and outside ELT settings in both governmental and non-governmental universities. A glimpse at the titles of interpreting types including medical, legal, religious, conflict zones, military, media, signed language, technology-assisted, conference, community, machine, business, sport, tourist and diplomatic, each with its own sub-branches, elaborates the fact that this multidisciplinary area of study can contribute to convergence of a variety of majors as the names speak for themselves.

Participant 1: As a university teacher, I highly agree with the idea of having interpreting major for at least two reasons. One is, according to the current situation at Islamic Azad University, **the paucity of classes** due to a **sharp decline in the number of students** even for faculty members. Two is the **multidisciplinary nature** of interpreting with different genres of e.g. **sport, law, politics, economy**, etc.

Participant 2: In accordance with the **policies superimposed** by the science ministry and the Islamic Azad University officials, **economically unjustifiable majors** should be replaced with the ones which are more **demanding** in terms of **job opportunities** and as the **market dictates**, there are more rooms for people with **multidisciplinary skills** like interpreting.

4.3.4. Researchability

Interpreting is studded with gems of insights from disciplines other than ELT, for instance, medicine, sport, law, tourism, business, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, culture, to mention but a few, due to the multidisciplinarity of its essence. Interpreter training can be a subject of its own type to recuperate the seemingly tired bodies of ELT and Translation in research areas in Iran which have long been centered on investigating the effect of one

particular method on the achievement of a certain skill or sub-skill in one way or another and the comparative analysis of two translations against a particular model respectively. Therefore, this discipline-to-be due to its novelty, is capable enough to, figuratively put, blast the balloon of boredom in research areas. Many areas of interpreting, in contrast to its long history and in comparison to translation, seem to remain untouched.

Participant 1: In my opinion, another interesting issue in interpreting in Iran is that there is **a plethora of novel research ideas**. You know, the topics for research in **teaching and translation majors** become an **obstacle** for students because almost whatever they choose has been **done many times before** and to come up with a new idea is rather difficult. Therefore, interpreting can provide students with **many fresh research topics** for investigation.

Participant 2: Students seem to be **bored and confused** when it comes to choosing a **research** topic for their thesis proposals. Since they are not familiar with interpreting areas of research, normally they don't tend to work on them. However, if they study a specialized interpreting course such as **medical interpreting** or **sport interpreting** as a **separate major**, then they can touch upon **a plenty of research areas** to search between the two disciplines.

4.3.5. Dearth of Specialization

Certain areas of interpreting are hypercritical and would require high level expertise to avoid any discrepancy. For instance, court proceedings and medical appointments are highly critical issues due to the fact that any forms of incongruity may result in a hazardous health status of a patient or an unfair sentence of a defendant. Accordingly, the interpreters, here, not just require professional interpreting expertise, but they also need the experience of handling such issues. In the same vein, the interpreters for legal and medical issues need to acquire detailed knowledge of the subjects to ensure that no wrong interpretation takes place. Humanistically put, the establishment of interpreter training discipline is pivotal to training professional interpreters to serve as a savior of people who are in dire need of interpreting services when interpreting is a matter of life and death.

Participant 1: One of the **vital** points in the field of interpreting is **lack of experts** in interpreting a **special subject**. For example, in **medicine or law**, which

are technically called medical and legal interpreting, we need more **skilled interpreters** who not only are competent in general aspects of interpreting, but also are **completely knowledgeable in that subject area**. As a matter of fact, in this case the **life of a patient** can be put in **jeopardy** if a **wrong interpretation** happens.

Participant 2: If interpreting is going to be established, all **forms of specialization** should be included in the program especially in the areas with the **shortage**. In other words, we have to train interpreters as **experts of one type of interpreting** such as court interpreting. An untrained, incompetent interpreter may lead an innocent person to jail, in other words, **injustice** may happen due to **lack of expertise** in interpreting legal issues.

4.3.6. Addressing Stakeholders

What may render the establishment of interpreter training as an independent discipline as significant is that it is angled at all stakeholders, namely policy makers, curriculum developers, materials developers, test designers, evaluators, interpreter trainers, interpreters, and students. To curricularize interpreting training, it is imperative for all stakeholders to be involved. Curriculum developers are to constantly update the curriculum on the basis of newly emerged needs and market demand, materials developers to adapt and adopt materials mostly based on technological advances, test designers to guarantee the market with reliable professionals through admission and achievement tests, evaluators to examine the quality of courses, interpreter trainers to address the latest interpreting education and pedagogy, interpreters to be accredited as trained and professional and students to be trained as future interpreters.

Participant 1: **A complete group** should be involved in the process of creating this new discipline. First and foremost are the educational **policy makers** at Islamic Azad University who should highlight the principles. After that, we need enough **interpreter trainers** and **test and curriculum designers** as well as motivated **students** to learn.

Participant 2: To realize the curriculum, the **curriculum and material developers** must consult the expert **interpreters** in order to address the various aspects of interpreting from Persian to English and reverse. They should also try to get inspiration from foreigner universities.

4.3.7. Generating Pertinent Activities

The establishment of interpreter training discipline can mark a turning-point in educational history which can pave the way for other relevant activities such as the establishment of specialized interpreting journal, association and guild which are still non-existent in Iran. Additionally, it is a truism that the establishment of the above-said entities can potentially lay the foundations for running specialized seminars, conferences, workshops, committees, commissions, publications, and the like on interpreting and interpreter training. A hitherto neglected aspect, at least in Iran, is the interpreter trainer education i.e. to educate the interpreter trainers to meet the availability of competent teaching staff. Therefore, this discipline-to-establish can shed light on interpreter trainer education.

Participant 1: When we have interpreting major, then other related activities would be **created**, for example, technical and special **journal** exclusively for interpreting. Other can be holding **conferences**, **seminars** and maybe **workshops** just to deal with interpreting.

Participant 2: Exactly like translation, interpreting training can potentially **produce** its special education like **teacher education** and **publications of journals** and even some gatherings like special **association and guild** for interpreters.

4.3.8. Glocal Reputation

Ideally, since there is a vast number of interpreting settings especially in international affairs including conferences, workshops, seminars, etc., the graduate students of interpreter training can act as ambassadors of the Iranian academia to exchange knowledge and to champion global peace in the world through negotiation and interaction. It seems that interpreter training as an independent discipline has sufficient potential to achieve national and more ambitiously international academic fame and the relevant issues for the benefit of all the stakeholders.

Participant 1: When we have some professional interpreters who **graduated from Azad** [University] and they work in famous places like **international conferences or UN**, this is by itself the best **advertisement** for the university.

Participant 2: The **alumni** of Islamic Azad University can write articles, teach at international universities and also interpret! All of these activities can **gain prestige** for this university and its students.

4.3.9. Employability

Demand for interpreting is growing for many languages both spoken and signed. For instance, the growth in sign language interpreting is because of an increase in video relay services, in Asian and African languages for the trade growth, in medical interpreting for patient safety and hygienic cognizance, and in court interpreting for legal requirements for equal access to justice. Furthermore, due to globalization processes, interpreting services demand has increased and, concordantly, the need for trained and professional interpreters.

Participant 1: Not only in Iran do we have a **high demand** for qualified interpreters, but also there is a **must** in some countries for the **presence of interpreters** in some occasions like **court** or **hospitals** according to their **Constitutions** which is called **public service interpreting**.

Participant 2: The **globalization** requires people to get closer to one another. One obstacle for this is the language that can be solved by **a trained interpreter**. Moreover, to respect deaf people or maybe according to law, normally in important press conferences there is a **signed interpreter**. **Technological advances** also help remote interpreting, therefore, there are many **job opportunities** for the graduates.

The table below displays the number and percentage of codes about the expediencies of establishing interpreter training as an independent discipline in the Iranian higher education.

Table 11
Number and Percentage of Codes on the Expediency of establishing interpreter training as an independent discipline

codes	number	percentage
Non-existence	24	96
Academization	22	88
Multidisciplinarity	21	84
Researchability	19	76

Dearth of Specialization	17	68
Addressing Stakeholders	17	68
Generating Pertinent Activities	15	60
Glocal Reputation	12	48
Employability	11	44

The percentage of codes can also be displayed as the following figure.

Figure 6
Percentage of Codes on the Expediency of Establishing Interpreter Training as an Independent Discipline
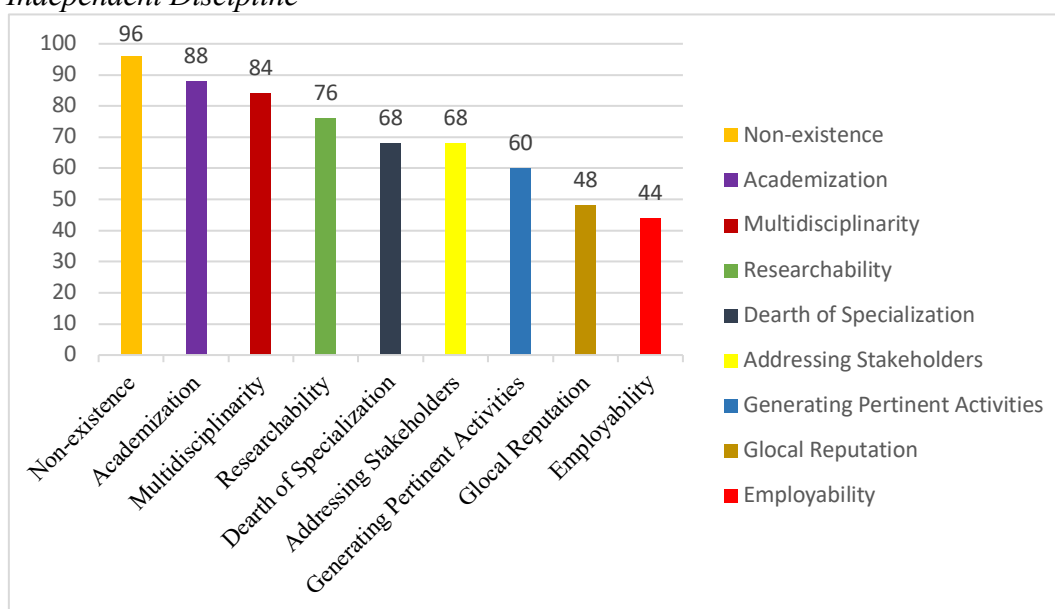
5. Discussion

This research aimed at investigating the status quo of interpreting courses in the Iranian academia as well as the possible expediency for interpreter training to be introduced as an autonomous discipline in higher education in Iran. As stated earlier, two research questions were raised in this study. The findings of the first research question revealed the students' attitudes on the five main categories of interpreting current situation namely, needs analysis, objectives, methodology, materials and content. Moreover, the results revealed a number of expediency for

the establishment of interpreter training as an independent discipline including non-existence, academization, multidisciplinarity, researchability, dearth of specialization, addressing stakeholders, generating pertinent activities, glocal reputation and employability.

A comparison can be made between the findings of this study and those conducted by Furmanek (2010) which are relatively aligned with each other, in that, both regarded interpreting as an independent discipline and the latter one even had the ambition to introduce what the author called "Applied Interpreting Studies" as a subfield of interpreting studies. In addition, the results of this study revealed that students hold similar views toward some specific items mentioned in the questionnaire regarding the establishment of interpreter training discipline. Moreover, both interpreters and interpreter trainers approached positively towards interpreter training to be developed as a self-sufficient discipline.

The obtained findings of this research are also fairly compatible with those of the study performed by Xu (2015) which concentrated on the doctoral dissertations concerning various aspects of CIS (Chinese Interpreting Studies) conducted in China and one of its important issue was developing interpreter studies curriculum. However, it has been nearly two decades that CIS has emerged while interpreting studies in Iran particularly at the graduate level is non-existent.

Furthermore, Pochhacker's (2009) paper entitled "Broader, better, further: Developing Interpreting Studies" is partially in line with the present study in findings. In his paper, Pochhacker elaborated on a number of issues regarding dealing with a movement from interpreting as a sub-discipline towards future needs and aspirations of interpreting as a broader discipline. He further posited that the curricular arrangements in developing Interpreting Studies should pave the way for those interested in Ph.D. studies to structure the future of research on interpreting (Pochhacker, 2004).

Another similar study implemented by Herring and Swabey (2018) illustrated either the required elements or potential particulars to be included within an interpreting curriculum as an "Experiential Learning in Interpreter Education". She aptly suggested the integration of service learning into an interpreter education curriculum as well as the integration of a mentorship placement program throughout interpreter training curriculum.

In the same vein, another study conducted by Yenkimaleki and van Heuven

(2019) revealed that the learners' first language, as one of the main particulars, should be taken into account in the interpreter training curriculum by curriculum developers, course designers and policy makers. This is specifically when source and target language differ prosodically, in which case, curriculum should bear prosody training.

Additionally, a number of research on the curriculum development in Iran have been also conducted with regard to educational reforms. For instance, Kiany, et al. (2011) revisited the approach of national curriculum towards foreign language education. By the same token, Beikian and Ganji (2022) delved into the coverage level of language and culture competence in the curricula of B.A. and M.A. English Translation Programs. Finally, Davari et al. (2020) conducted a critical evaluation of the new English Language Program in the national system from the perspective of ELT curriculum specialists.

Lastly a word on discussion, the results of this study could be rendered as significant since it has taken the ideas of three groups of stakeholders, i.e. interpreters, interpreter trainers and students into account; in other words, the perspectives of those who deal finally with the interpreter training discipline. Therefore, this study could be a reflection of the status quo of interpreting courses and the necessity to establish interpreter training at the graduate level in Iran.

6. Conclusion

According to the results obtained from the first research question, the current interpreting courses in Iran do not meet the needs of students in terms of number of credits and courses. In addition, the students held the view that it is required to establish the interpreter training as an independent discipline in the higher education. Moreover, the interpreter trainees considered that there is no consensus among trainers about the interpreting syllabus and that the courses are not taught in a practical way and the balance between theoretical and practical issues is not made. Almost half of the students believed that current courses are not very much different from translation courses in terms of strategies and techniques. They also thought that the use of technology in the classes is not at all satisfactory. However, they stated that the trainers are all experts in the interpreting field and the techniques taught are applicable in the real interpreting settings. In the state of materials,

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trainees declared that the trainers utilize the customized materials for Iranian students and Persian language, yet they held the perspective that the trainers do not use a variety of sources to practice in class and the state-of-the-art materials are not used in classes by the trainers and that these materials are not available in the market. Students also were not satisfied with the quality of course contents and the facilities of universities but they posited that the assigned tasks are performance-based and the projects are learning-oriented. Last but not least, they believed that the examinations and the assessment system in general are not oral-based and the interpreting skills and competencies are not assessed properly.

Therefore, in accordance with the findings, the establishment of interpreter training as an independent discipline is required in the Iranian higher education for a number of reasons. First and foremost, current courses in interpreting, i.e. 6 mandatory credits in B.A. and 2 elective credits in M.A. in Translation Studies Discipline, do not meet the needs of students. Second, the status quo of interpreting courses in terms of objectives, syllabus and teaching methodology, materials and course contents sheds light on how to deal with the situation as, analogously put, without thorough diagnosis of the patient, the doctor cannot prescribe anything. Last, the findings may lead us to pave the way to problematize, systematize, theorize, curricularize, materialize (i.e. materials development), semesterize and in fact academize interpreter training as a self-sufficient discipline in a concatenated manner.

Moreover, as the findings of this study suggest, there are a number of expediency for the establishment of interpreter training at the graduate level in every local setting of which Iranian academia can be an example. It is, therefore, safe to claim that training professional interpreters to meet the market demand in this globalized world of today is inevitable. To train such competent interpreters, then, can be performed through formal education in a collegiate atmosphere designed specifically to serve this purpose. In a nutshell, as aptly suggested by the findings of this research, the establishment of interpreter training at the graduate level in Iran seems exigent for a number of given reasons including non-existence, academization, multidisciplinarity, researchability, dearth of specialization, addressing stakeholders, generating pertinent activities, glocal reputation, and employability.

Last but not least, the basic limitation in this study was the sparse number of university interpreting classes as well as university professors who specialized in

this field for interviews and data collection. Another restriction was the thin ELT literature directly or indirectly addressing the interpreting issues in the Iranian academic settings. Furthermore, the main self-imposed delimitation in this study was that the researchers recruited the ethnography of the Islamic Azad University South Tehran Branch for data collection processes to enhance the manageability of this study.

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