

**INVESTIGATING THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN A
TRANSLATION CLASS AT ALLAMEH TABATABA'I
UNIVERSITY, IRAN**

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**INVESTIGATING THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN A TRANSLATION CLASS AT
ALLAMEH TABATABA'I UNIVERSITY, IRAN**

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the loving memory of my mother whose love made me who I am today and to my father whose never-ending love and support pushes me in my life.

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**MENKAKAJI PENGGUNAAN INTERNET DI DALAM KELAS
PENTERJEMAHAN DI UNIVERSITI ALLAMEH TABATABA'I,
IRAN**

Abstrak

Tiada keraguan atau kesangsian bahawa Internet merupakan satu daripada rekaan atau ciptaan terhebat alaf ke-20, yang memberi impak atau kesan yang mendalam terhadap kehidupan kita seharian. Ia bukan hanya memudahkan capaian maklumat, malahan ia juga menyediakan suatu mod komunikasi yang baru di seantero dunia. Sumber maklumat yang berharga ini juga memberikan banyak manfaat kepada para penterjemah. Kajian kualitatif bertujuan merungkai implikasi dan aplikasi Internet sebagai korpus maya yang besar dan juga sebagai suatu sumber perolehan teks bagi inklusi dalam korpora DIY, dalam konteks terjemahan teks politik daripada bahasa Inggeris ke bahasa Parsi. Di samping itu, kegunaan *Google Translator Toolkit* dalam konteks yang sama turut dirungkai. Kajian berusaha menentukan atitud atau sikap pelajar semasa mengikuti kelas terjemahan berasaskan Internet. Subjek terdiri daripada 22 orang pelajar sarjana muda terjemahan yang mengikuti kursus terjemahan teks politik di Jabatan Pengajian Terjemahan, Universiti Allameh Tabataba'i, Tehran, Iran. Kutipan data penyelidikan adalah bersumberkan penelitian penyelidik (sebagai guru kursus), perbincangan dalam kelas di samping jawapan soal

selidik, serta temu bual secara tidak formal dengan pelajar. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa Web berguna sebagai suatu korpus maya dan sumber perolehan teks bagi inklusi dalam korpora DIY. Meskipun, kualiti terjemahan Google tidaklah begitu baik, namun *Google Translators Toolkit* didapati berguna serta membantu kelas terjemahan kami. Akhir sekali, pelajar menunjukkan reaksi positif terhadap pengalaman mereka mengikuti kelas terjemahan berasaskan Internet.

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN A TRANSLATION CLASS AT ALLAMEH TABATABA'I UNIVERSITY, IRAN

Abstract

There is no doubt that the Internet is one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century which has had a tremendous impact on our everyday lives. It not only has eased the access of information, but has also provided a new mode of communication across the globe. This valuable source of information has also a lot to offer translators. The present qualitative study aimed at elaborating on the implications and applications of the Internet as a big virtual corpus and as a resource to get texts for inclusion in DIY corpora, in the context of translation of political texts from English into Persian. It further set out to elaborate on the use of Google Translator Toolkit in the same context. Last but not least, the present study sought to determine the students' attitude towards having an Internet-based translation class. The experiment lasted for one academic semester and the subjects were 22 senior undergraduate English translation students passing the course *translation of political texts* at the Department of Translation Studies of Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. The observation done by the researcher (as the teacher of the course), the students' class discussions along with their answers to the questionnaires and finally the unstructured informal interviews conducted with the students during the semester formed the basis for the data collected in the present research. The findings proved that that the Web can be useful both as a virtual corpus and as a resource to get texts for inclusion in DIY

disposable corpora in the context under question. Moreover, despite the rather poor quality of Google translations, Google Transators Toolkit proved useful in our collaborative translation class. Last but not least, the students demonstrated a positive attitude toward their Internet-based collaborative class experience.

1 Introduction

Chapter one provides an introduction to the present research elaborating on the research background, research problems and the significance of the study. It further presents the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. Last but not least, the scope and limitations of the study are explained and the key terms are defined.

1.1 Research Background

The translation market like many other markets has been subject to the pressures of globalization during recent years. The advent of the Internet, the introduction of computer-aided translation technology, the increasing demand for services such as localization and desktop publishing from translators and finally the emergence of online translation portals are among the forces pushing the traditional translation market and translation industry towards a new modern era.

Some years ago, dictionaries and possibly typewriters were translators' best friends. Today, however, computers with the Internet connection seem indispensable to what translators do. Nowadays most translation jobs are sent via emails to freelance translators across the world. Clients may post their jobs on translation portals and freelance translators all over the world can quote and get the jobs. As Olvera-Lobo, Castro-Prieto *et al.* (2005: 134) state,

The Internet and the information and communication technology revolutions have altered the working environments of translators, including the relationship between translators and clients, both as mediators and as end users. Previously,

translators were available in and provided their services in a specific geographical area. There are no longer such limitations; in fact, most translation services are offered and supplied through the Internet.

Translators are therefore no longer bound to work for local clients. They can upload their resumes into translation portals and get job from clients all over the world. It, thus, can be claimed that the new online translation market has indirectly widened the translators' professional prospect in the sense that they have a better chance of working with more clients.

At the same time, the new globalized translation market has expanded the range of skills and competencies required of translators. To succeed in the present competitive market, translators need to expand both their linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge and skills. Translators need, among other things, interpersonal skills to win translation jobs and maintain a good relation with their clients and fellow translators; computer skills to work with machine translations, translation memories and corpora and editing skills to provide their clients with an acceptable final version of translation (Vaezian: 2009b). They also need to have an encyclopedic knowledge of various subjects to work with various texts or else to have the necessary resources to acquire such knowledge, when the need arises. As stated by Olvera-Lobo, Castro-Prieto *et al.* (2005: 132),

The demanding professional translation market expects would be professionals to have a broad knowledge of the subject matter of the text, to use a large number of computer tools proficiently, and to be versatile in the sense that they can master all elements in the translation process.

To put it in a different way, the so-called globalized translation market has indirectly imposed its standards on translators all over the world. To enter this market, translators need to be familiar with the state of the art translation technology. They need to be prepared to meet the changing needs of the clients or else they may simply have no chance in the present competitive market.

In the face of this changing translation market, the World Wide Web has turned into one of the translators' primary resources (Gatto: 2009). The online resources professional translators draw on vary from online glossaries and term banks to online corpora. Of course, some new uses of the Internet for translators have further emerged during recent years. One of the novel uses of the Internet for translators is using the Internet as a source of linguistic information. In this approach, the Web is considered as a large multilingual corpus which can be queried using either ordinary search engines or web concordancers (ibid). The Web as a virtual corpus, thus, is supposed to provide translators with the information real corpora have to offer to translators.

There is yet another approach to the use of the World Wide Web for translators, i.e. using the Web as a resource to get texts for inclusion in *DIY disposable corpora*, i.e. “a collection of Internet documents or more precisely of web pages in HTML format created ad hoc as a response to a specific text to be translated” (Zanettin 2002a: 242). In this approach, the translator would compile a small disposable corpus of Internet documents to get answer to his/her questions for a specific translation task. Here again

the Web can indirectly provide translators with the benefits associated with using corpora in translation through providing texts for inclusion in DIY disposable corpora.

The Google Translator Toolkit can possibly be considered as the latest offering of the Internet to translators. Google Translator Toolkit is an editing tool which enables users to edit the translations done by Google Translate which is a free online machine translation. This new tool which was officially launched in June 2009 is an addition to Google Translate specifically designed to integrate human translation with machine translation.

All in all, the Internet seems to play a major role in what translators do today. It is not only a channel for translators to connect with clients and fellow translators, but also a valuable source of linguistic information for translators. The main advantage this giant resource has over the traditional translation resources is that it is available to all users around the world. Apart from that, it is constantly updated with new texts. This implies that the Internet as a source of linguistic information can provide translators with up-to-date data about various languages. Last but not least, with the Internet at their disposal, translators can access free online translation facilities such as Google Translator Toolkit.

Taking into account all the benefits the Internet has to offer to translators as well as its considerable advantages over the traditional translation resources, it seems necessary for student translators to learn about this valuable source during their education. In fact, if we accept that the main objective of the translator education is guiding students

towards becoming professional translators and helping them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be able to work in today's translation market, incorporation of the Internet into translation classrooms seems necessary.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The translators' use of the World Wide Web has gone far beyond using online dictionaries, glossaries and term banks. Translators nowadays use the Web as a new translation resource with vast amount of linguistic data about almost all languages (Gatto: 2009). The concept behind the new application of the Web as a source of linguistic information is based on the notion of the Web as a big corpus. Based on this concept, the World Wide Web can be considered as a large virtual monitor corpus with texts constantly added to it.

As the body of the literature on corpora suggests, corpora have a lot to offer translators. Corpora have been shown to provide student translators with terminological and conceptual information (Zanettin, 1998), collocational information (Kubler, 2003), phraseological information (Machniewski, 2006) and information on cognates, false friends (Zanettin, 2001) as well as semantic prosody (Bowker, 2000). In addition, translations produced with the help of corpora have been shown to be of a higher quality in terms of subject field understanding, correct term choice and idiomatic expression compared to translations produced using conventional resources available to translators (Bowker, 1998).

Despite the considerable benefits of real corpora for translators, there are some practical problems regarding the use of them by translators. First, the number of existing corpora is limited and they are mostly limited to a few languages. Second, most existing corpora are domain specific and supply a limited range of genres and text types (Fujii: 2007). Third, the existing corpora may not always contain the exact information the translator is looking for.

Drawing on the World Wide Web as a big corpus, however, is not subject to such limitations; the Web can be considered as a very large multilingual corpus containing texts in almost all languages and all text types and it is available to users around the world.

Adopting this approach, the Web can be regarded as a translation resource parallel to other translation resources such as corpora and dictionaries. It is thus quite reasonable to expect translators to draw on this new resource in doing their jobs. Based on the results of a comprehensive survey carried out in 2005 among translation students and professional translators within an EU-funded project (MeLLANGE project¹), around 95% of the participants made use of the Web for translation-related tasks. The results of this survey further showed that using the Web as big corpus via the ordinary search engines was one of the most common uses that translators made of the Web.

¹ MeLLANGE (Multilingual eLearning in Language Engineering) is a European Union funded project aimed at providing student and professional translators with an opportunity to update their translation-related skills in accordance with the market demands. In line with this objective, a survey was carried out among translation students and professional translators in UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain to have a better overview of the needs of translation students and professionals. The results of this comprehensive survey are available online at: http://www.itl.org.uk/uploadedFiles/surveys/Mellange_Survey_Updated%2805-06%29.pdf

Despite such extensive use of the Internet by translators in the West, it seems that this valuable source of linguistic information has not still found its rightful place in translator education in some countries around the world. The use of the Internet seems an utterly neglected aspect in undergraduate translation teaching at Iranian universities with translation classrooms having a traditional structure without the students having access to computers, let alone the Internet (Vaezian: 2009a).

This situation implies that would be translators would simply miss the opportunity they have as learners to learn about this valuable resource of information and this can deprive them from utilizing the Internet not only during their education, but also all through their professional lives. In fact, if the tomorrow's professional translators are to utilize the Internet as a new source of information, it is necessary that they learn about it as the students of today.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The translator's professional profile has changed considerably during recent years in the sense that new skills and competencies are required of translators. Professional translators today are not merely language experts, but professionals with advanced skills in using the Internet and computer-aided translation technology. As Kiraly (2003: 13) states, "translators can no longer be seen merely as bilingual scribes; they are multi-faceted interlingual mediators with a broad range of skills and capabilities that are essential to text production". One of the skills increasingly required of translators in today's translation market is the ability to utilize the Internet as a new

source of linguistic information and as a channel to connect with clients and fellow translators.

The present study aims at introducing the Internet into an undergraduate translation classroom at the Department of Translation Studies of Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran. The significance of this study is in fact twofold. First, it is the very first attempt to incorporate the Internet into a translation classroom at a university in Iran. Second, it draws on the most recent uses of the Internet for translators hoping to provide insights into the uses of the Internet in the context of translation classrooms.

The methodology and the results of this study, thus, would not only be of great use to translation teachers at Iranian universities, but can also provide valuable insights to translation teachers and researchers around the world as for incorporating the Internet into translation classrooms . The current study further, ambitiously, hopes to pave the way for the introduction of the Internet into translation classrooms at Iranian universities. Last but not least, the researcher hopes this study would encourage translation teachers around the world to be more receptive towards the Internet and what it has to offer to translators.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present research aims to elaborate on the implications and applications of using the Internet as, a) a big virtual corpus, and b) a resource to get texts for inclusion in DIY corpora, in the context of translation of political texts from English into Persian. It further sets out to research the use of Google Translator Toolkit in the same context.

Last but not least, the present study seeks to determine the students' attitude towards having an Internet-based translation class.

1.5 Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the implications and applications of the Web as a big corpus in an undergraduate specialized translation class in the context of translation of political texts from English into Persian?
- 2- What are the implications and applications of the Web as a resource for building DIY corpora of Persian political texts?
- 3- What are the implications and applications of Google Translator Toolkit in an undergraduate specialized translation class in the context of translation of political texts from English into Persian?
- 4- What is the students' attitude towards their Internet-based class experience?

1.6 Conceptual Framework

A theory, in its general sense, has been defined as a set of statements claiming universal validity (Popper: 2002). Theories in research design express prescriptive statements which guide the research in general. Given the novel nature of the present research, there was no theory to begin with. The researcher thus drew on relevant approaches to justify and guide the present research.

In line with the approach taken by Zanettin, Bernardini and Stewart (2003), translator education in this research is seen as a framework in which learners learn to employ

available resources to solve problems they may encounter in the course of translating texts. The internet, in this context, is seen as a new translation resource for translators with the potentials to provide information beyond what traditional translation resources have to offer to translators. Furthermore, adopting a professional approach to translator education, the present study aims at incorporating some of the Internet skills necessary for professional translators in today's market into an undergraduate translation classroom at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran.

The design of the teaching methodology adopted in this study including various class activities and exercises is based on the *social constructivist approach* to translator education (Kiraly, 2000) which asks for collaborative learning based on “learner’s empowerment” (p. 18). In this approach, translator education is seen as “a dynamic, interactive process” allowing the students to learn through experience (ibid). The teacher, on the other hand, is supposed to act as a guide helping the students all through their learning journey (ibid). In a translation class conducted based on the social constructivist approach to translator education, the students learn how to become professional translators by experiencing the real challenges involved in translation through collaboration with their peers and their teacher as well. In such classes, as stated by Kiraly (ibid, 37), the students learn how to learn, a skill which can “serve them in an infinite and unpredictable variety of situations once they leave the institution”.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present study set out to explore into an Internet-based translation classroom. It exclusively focuses on the use of the Internet in the context of translation of political texts from English into Persian in an undergraduate translation classroom at the Department of Translation Studies of Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran.

There are thus two limitations that need to be acknowledged regarding the present study. The first limitation has to do with the exploratory and qualitative nature of the present research which aims at providing insights into an Internet-based translation classroom, rather than giving definitive answer. The second limitation concerns the extent to which the findings can be generalized. The present study is limited to the use of the Internet for translation of political texts from English into Persian in an undergraduate translation class. Thus, although the findings can provide valuable insights into the use of the Internet in a translation classroom in general, they may not be directly generalizable to settings where different language pairs or different genres are concerned.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

In the present section, the keywords and the technical terms that are essential for the understanding of the present research are defined.

The Collaborative homework assignments: In this study, the collaborative homework assignments refer to the kind of homework assignments the students are asked to do in collaboration with their group members.

Collocation: a feature in corpus analysis tools which computes collocations, i.e. co-occurring patterns of words (Tengku Mahadi, Vaezian & Akbari: 2010).

Concordancer: a feature in corpus analysis tools which retrieves all the occurrences of a certain search term in its immediate context and displays them in an easy-to-read format (Tengku Mahadi, Vaezian & Akbari: 2010).

Corpus analysis tools: the tools developed to help researchers extract data from corpora (Tengku Mahadi, Vaezian & Akbari: 2010).

DIY corpus: small disposable corpora of Internet documents created to help translators deal with the translation at hand or in Zanettin's words, "a collection of Internet documents or more precisely of web pages in HTML format created ad hoc as a response to a specific text to be translated" which is an open and disposable corpus (2002a: 242).

Google Translate: a free online machine translation provided by Google to translate a section of text or a web page into another language (Webopedia).

Google Translator Toolkit: an editing tool which enables translators to edit the translations done by Google Translate (Google guide: 2009).

Internet-based translation class: In this study, the Internet-based translation class refers to a translation class where the students use the Internet for translation purposes.

Phrase search: a feature of Google Search Engine which allows users to look for an exact phrase by putting double quotation ("") marks around a set of words (Google guide: 2009).

Social constructivist approach to translator education: An approach to translator education by Kiraly (2000) which asks for collaborative learning based on learners' autonomy and empowerment, with the teacher acting as a guide.

Web as Corpus: a recent approach to the Web which considers it as a large multilingual corpus with search engines and/or web concordancers as tools for querying it.

Web concordancer: the concordancers specifically designed to query the Web as a corpus or as Gatto (2009: 80) defines, "suite of tools which provides contextualized examples of language usage from the web in a form tailored for linguistic analysis".

Web search engines: the programs that search the web documents for specified keywords and return a list of the documents containing the keywords found. Two well-known examples are Google and Yahoo (Webopedia).

WebAsCorpus Web concordancer: a Web Concordancer designed by William Fletcher which supports 34 languages including Persian.

Wildcard search: a feature in Google Search Engine which enables users to substitute a character as a stand in for any word or letter in a search phrase by using an asterisk (*) (Google guide: 2009).

Word-frequency list: the most basic feature of the corpus analysis tools which allows users to see how many different words are in a corpus and how often each one of them appears (Tengku Mahadi, Vaezian & Akbari: 2010).

Wordsmith Tools: an integrated suite of programs developed by Scott (2004) for extracting information from corpora.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The present document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction into the present study elaborating on the research background, the research problem and the significance of the study. It further discusses the research objectives and presents the research questions. Following that, the conceptual framework of the research is discussed and the scope and limitations of the study are explained. Last but not least, the key terms of the study have been defined.
- Chapter 2 elaborates on the education system in Iran in general, and the undergraduate English Translation Program at Iranian universities in particular, hoping to provide the background information needed to better understand the setting of the present research.
- Chapter 3 reviews the related literature. It starts with translator training, elaborating on some of the most recent approaches adopted in this context. It further discusses the idiosyncrasies of the present translation market and the kind of skills required of translators in the current market. The discussion is

further focused on the Internet and what it has to offer to translators, following which the concept of the Web as a corpus is elaborated on and what corpora have to offer to translators are discussed. The remainder of the chapter 3 is focused on the use of Google search engine and webascopus to query the web as a corpus discussing the relevant studies and researches. Last but not least, Google Translate and Google Translator Toolkit are discussed in the final sections of chapter 3.

- Chapter 4 elaborates on the path followed to accomplish the present research. It starts with the research design and then elaborates on the time and setting of the study. Following that, the subjects of the study are introduced and the teaching methodology adopted is explained in detail elaborating on the teaching content and schedule. The remainder of the chapter is focused on our data collection plan and the instruments used to collect the data needed.
- Chapter 5 presents and discusses the main findings of the study. It is divided into four main sections with each section presenting and discussing the findings of one of the research questions raised in the present research.
- Chapter 6 elaborates on the additional findings of the study. It is divided into two main sections. The first section elaborates on the findings on Using Wordsmith on Persian corpora, while the second section has to do with the translations the students did with and without the Internet during the final session of the class.
- Chapter 7 which is the final chapter summarizes the main findings of the study and elaborates on the major conclusions derived from the findings. The

remainder of chapter 7 is devoted to the possible avenues for further research along with the contributions of the study.

2 Background: The Undergraduate English Translation Program at Iranian Universities

The present chapter elaborates on the education system in Iran in general, and the undergraduate English translation program at Iranian universities in particular, hoping to provide the background information needed to better understand the setting of the present research.

2.1 The Education System in Iran

The present section provides a brief overview of the school and university education in Iran. It in fact introduces the education system in Iran in general setting the ground for understanding the following sections which deal with undergraduate translation programs at Iranian universities in general and at Allameh Tabataba'i University in particular.

2.1.1 School Education

School education in Iran is divided into five cycles; pre-school, primary school, middle school, secondary school and finally pre-university cycle (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.).

Pre-school is a one year cycle intended for children aged 5. *Primary cycle* is a five year cycle intended for the students aged 6 to10. *Middle or Guidance cycle* is a three year cycle intended for the students aged 11 to13. *Secondary education* is a four-year stage which covers grade 9 to Grade 12, for the students age 14 to 17.

Finally, *Pre-university* is a one year cycle intended for the students aged 18. In fact, the students wishing to enter university in Iran must pass a one year pre-university course, at the end of which they may obtain a ‘Pre-University Certificate’ which qualifies them to sit for the highly competitive National Entrance Exam, success in which is imperative in order to gain a place at a university in Iran (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.).

2.1.2 University Education in Iran

Admission to the universities in Iran is based on the successful placing in the competitive National Entrance Exam know as *Konkur*. *Konkur* is in fact a comprehensive nation-wide test success in which is imperative in order to gain a place at universities in Iran. Like the French Concours (upon which the Iranian *Konkur* was based), the students are ranked according to their achievement in this examination, and only the top performers are eligible for entering universities (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.).

The university degrees offered to Iranian students include *Associate Diploma*, *Bachelor Degree*, *Master Degree* and finally *Doctoral Degree* (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.).

Associate Diploma is a two year program offered in some universities and higher education institutions in Iran and the students enrolling for it must complete 72 to 78 units during their four-semester program (ibid). *Bachelor Degree* is a four year program offered in Iranian universities. Bachelor students are normally expected to

finish their degree within 4 to 5 years. It normally requires 130 to 140 semester hours to complete. *Master Degree* is awarded after completion of 36 to 40 semester credit hours (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.). Full-time master students are normally expected to finish their degree in two years by choosing one of the following three options depending on the field of study: a) The completion of 38 units; b) The completion of a minimum of 30 units, and a thesis; c) The completion of a minimum of 22 units and a research-based thesis (ibid). *Doctoral Degree* is awarded after completion of three years of study (60 units) and passage of a comprehensive examination before moving onto the dissertation phase. Writing a dissertation is the final requirement to be fulfilled by the PhD candidates in Iranian universities (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.).

Overall, the universities and institutions offering degree programs in Iran fall into the following four broad categories (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.):

1. Public universities/colleges which are controlled by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology or the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. These institutions are free of charge and entrance is through the National Entrance Exam (Kunkur).
2. Private non-profit universities or colleges which charge fees to the students. Entrance to such universities is subject to passing the National Entrance Exam (Kunkur) too.

3. Islamic Azad University (Open University) which is a private institution and charges fees to students. Entrance to Azad universities is via a separate Kunkur. It is necessary to mention that degrees from the Islamic Azad University were not officially recognized by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology before the year 2005. However, they currently are regarded as equal to the degrees from public and non-profit universities.

4. Technical and teacher training institutions which offer associate level qualifications in technical fields or teaching. Passing the National Entrance Exam is not required for entering such institutions. The following figure shows the education structure in Iran.

It is necessary to mention that all the state and private universities as well as higher education institutes in Iran working under the laws of Islamic Republic of Iran offering various programs follow the same curricula for the various programs offered. In fact, it is the Ministry of Education in Iran which plans and designs the curricula for various university programs and all the universities and higher education institutes in Iran have to follow the curricula as approved by the ministry.

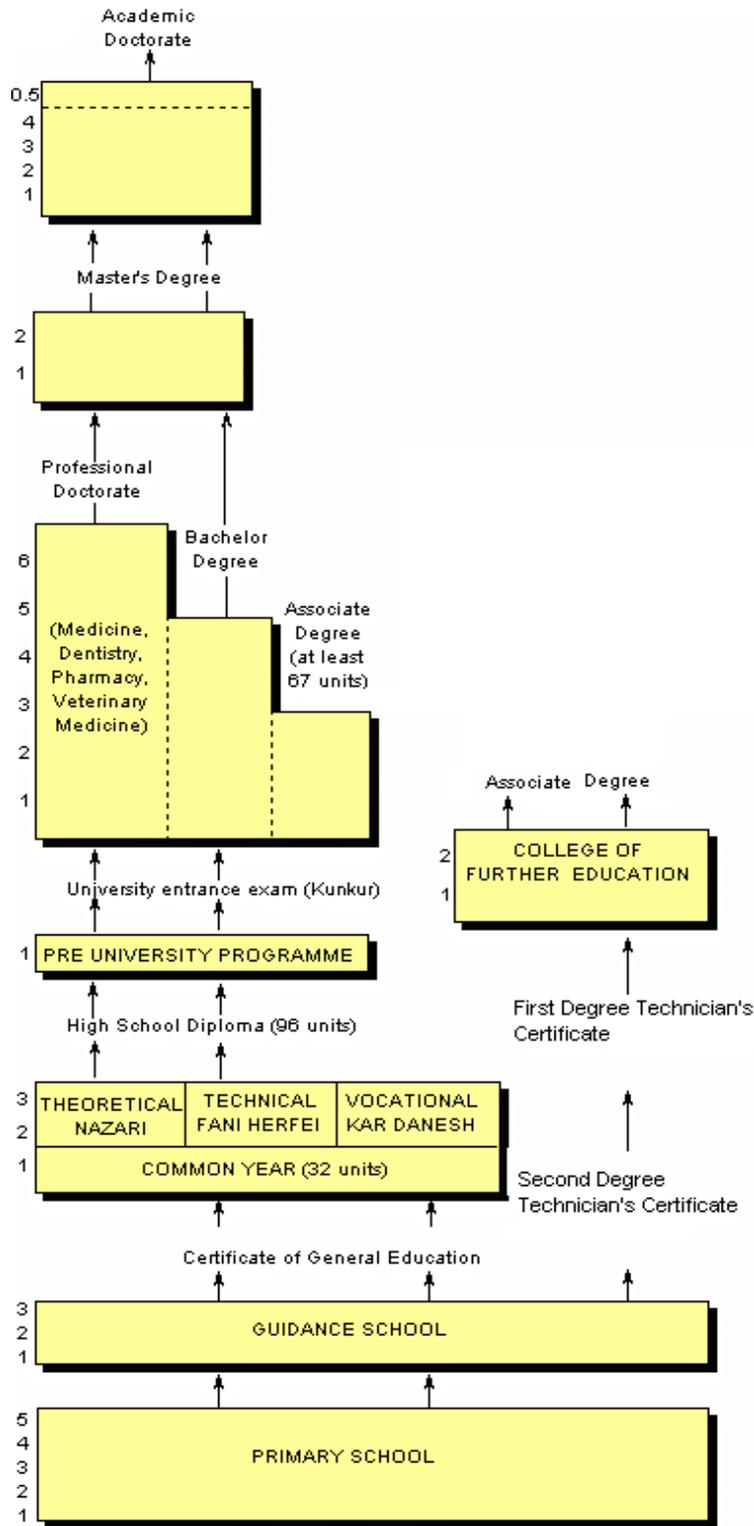


Figure 1 Education Structure in Iran (Higgins and Harris: 2007)

2.2 The Undergraduate English Translation Program at Iranian Universities

The establishment of the undergraduate English Translation Program as a distinctive major at Iranian universities dates back to around two decades ago when the plan for this major was passed at the High Council of Planning² of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in Iran. As defined in the plan, the focus of the four year BA English translation program was on the following two major points (“Curriculum for Undergraduate English Translation program” : 1990),

- 1) To help the students master the four English skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- 2) To help the students develop their translation skills

The program consists of 145 credits including 9 credits of general courses (“Curriculum for Undergraduate English Translation program”: 1990). The specialized courses for the program and their credits are shown in the following table.

² The Higher Council of Planning, consisting of fifteen professors and chaired by the Minister of Culture and Higher Education was responsible for the approval of educational programs in Iran before the recent changes in structure of the ministries and councils responsible for higher education in Iran.

Course Name	Credits
Advanced Translation I, II	2
Advanced Writing	2
An Introduction to English Literature I, II	2, 2
An Introduction to Modern Literature of Iran	2
Audiovisual Translation	2
Applications of Expressions and Idioms in Translation	2
Contrastive Analysis of Sentence Structure	2
Conversation and Lab I, II	4,4
English Business Correspondence	2
English Phonology	2
Essay Writing	2
FL Teaching Methodology	2
General Linguistics I, II	2, 2
General Persian	3
Grammar I, II	4, 4
Individual Translation I, II	2,2
Interpreting I, II, III	2
Language Testing	2
Methodology and Principles of Translation	2
Morphology	2
Oral Reproduction of Stories I, II	2, 2
Persian Sentence Structure	2
Persian Writing	2
Reading Comprehension I, II, III	4, 4, 4
Reading Journalistic Texts	2
Research Methodology I, II	2
Samples of Simple Poetry	2
Samples of Simple Prose	2
Study Skills	2
The Study of Translated Islamic Works I, II	2
Theoretical Principles and Fundamentals of Translation	2
Translation of Documents and Deeds I, II	2
Translation of Economic Texts	2
Translation of Journalistic Texts I, II	2
Translation of Literary Texts	2
Translation of Political Texts	2
Translation of Simple Texts	2

Table 1 List of specialized courses for BA in English Translation in Iran (“Curriculum for Undergraduate English Translation program”: 1990)

Based on the plan ratified by the High Council of Planning on July 8th 1990, all the state and private universities as well as higher education institutes in Iran working under the laws of Islamic Republic of Iran were required to adhere to the curriculum for the undergraduate English Translation program as planned by the Council (“Curriculum for Undergraduate English Translation program”: 1990).

This signifies the fact that all the universities in Iran offering English Translation program follow a similar curriculum. With this in mind, the researcher led herself to believe that for the purpose of the present research, Allameh Tabataba’i University can be regarded as a representative of the universities offering English Translation program in Iran. Allameh Tabataba’i University was thus chosen to conduct the present research.

2.3 Allameh Tabataba’i University

Allameh Tabataba’i University (ATU) is a state-run university in Tehran, Iran. It was founded after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, in 1983, through the articulation of 24 independent colleges and faculties such as the Literature and Humanities University Complex and the Commerce and Administration University Complex and many others. The university is mainly active in the humanities and economic sciences (“Education System in Iran”: n.d.). It currently comprises the following seven faculties:

1. Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages
2. Faculty of Economics