

## Evaluating the Context of Translation Courses in the Departments of English in Kurdistan Region, Iraq

Vian Mikhail Pouli<sup>1</sup>

Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Duhok, Duhok, Iraq

Correspondence: Vian Mikhail Pouli, University of Duhok, Duhok, Iraq

Email: vivian.mikhael@uod.ac

Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i1p209

**Abstract:** Evaluation plays an essential role in the educational process of colleges and universities since it is vital to the continuous improvement of education quality. Many models have been used to evaluate institutes' programs, courses, and projects, but Stufflebeam's CIPP (2003) is mainly applied in curriculum evaluation. Based on this model, this study aims at evaluating the context of translation courses offered in the Departments of English, Colleges of Languages at Salahaddin University-Erbil, University of Sulaimani, and University of Duhok. This paper adopted a quantitative method. A Likert scale questionnaire was designed based on the C component of Stufflebeam's CIPP (2003) evaluation model. The translation teachers and fourth-year students represented the sample of the study. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 24). Findings show that the context of translation courses in the Departments of English has gotten little attention in designing these courses. Thus, it is recommended to reconsider the context in designing translation courses in the Departments of English at Colleges of languages in Kurdistan universities.

**Keywords:** CIPP Model, Context Evaluation, Context of Translation Course, Departments of English, Evaluation

### 1. Introduction

Evaluation is "the process of delineating, obtaining, providing, and applying descriptive and judgmental information about the merit and worth of some object's goals, design, implementation, and outcomes to guide improvement decisions, provide accountability reports, inform institutionalization/ dissemination decisions, and improve understanding of the involved phenomena" (Stufflebeam, 2002, p. 280). In order to know whether an implemented novice curriculum is effective or not, evaluation or quality control is pivotal (Lewy, 1977). For curriculum development, Scriven (1967) introduced two types of evaluation-formative and summative. Formative evaluation occurs during the curriculum/ course development; conversely, summative evaluation is conducted at the end of the course to provide potential consumers with judgments about the worth or merit of the curriculum/ course (Ketlhoilwe, 2006). Thus, evaluation is widely acknowledged as a powerful means for achievement to improve the quality of education.

Received: November 14, 2022

Accepted: December 29, 2022

Pouli, V.M. (2023). Evaluating the Context of Translation Courses in the Departments of English in Kurdistan Region, Iraq. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(1), 209-217.

Literature has revealed that course evaluation, in general, and context evaluation, mainly have gotten little attention in Kurdistan universities, especially translation courses in the Departments of English. After 1991, when Kurdistan has become an autonomous region in northern Iraq, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRI) canceled the translation textbooks for the third and fourth years in the Departments of English. These textbooks were proposed by the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as they were designed to serve the Arabic context, not the Kurdish one. Accordingly, the responsibility of designing and developing the translation courses was given to the teachers based on their knowledge and experience. In evaluating the translation program offered in the Department of translation, College of Language, Salahaddin University- Erbil, in 2004, Omer (2012) found out that translation courses were designed based on unclear or same objectives as those of teaching translation in the Departments of English. So, since 1991, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, evaluating the context of translation courses offered in the Departments of English at Kurdistan universities has remained untouched.

The focus of this study is on summative evaluation. It is an extracted research paper from a Ph.D. dissertation. It aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the context of translation courses in the Departments of English, Colleges of Languages at Salahaddin University- Erbil (SUE), University of Sulaimani (UoS), and University of Duhok (UoD), based on the 'C' component of Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP evaluation model.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the context in teaching translation courses in the Departments of English, College of Languages at SUE, UoS, and UoD?
2. What are the students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the context in teaching translation courses in the Departments of English, College of Languages at SUE, UoS, and UoD?

### **2. Translation Course Evaluation**

Course evaluation is considered one of the essential aspects of any curriculum. It involves decisions that may be made concerning the future of the course, whether to maintain the course as it stands, amend it or get rid of it altogether. In this regard, course evaluation is defined as the collection of data on which decisions can be made on the worth and effectiveness of a course (Hussain et al., 2011).

Gabr (2001) listed four inter-related functions of translation course evaluation: (1) determining whether the processes of learning and transfer of knowledge have been successful, i.e., whether the course is accomplishing its objectives; (2) determining whether the objectives, course content, and delivery are appropriate to the process of learning and skills transfer needs; (3) identifying the strengths to be maintained and the weaknesses that need to be addressed, thus helping to improve the quality of current and future courses; (4) determining whether the course should be continued, revised, or discontinued. Although all these functions are interrelated, the appropriateness of the objectives and accomplishing them are essential elements in course evaluation.

## **2.1 Stufflebeam's CIPP Model of Evaluation**

There are many models for evaluating institutes' courses, programs, or projects; however, the CIPP model is mainly applied in curriculum evaluation. Daniel Stufflebeam developed this model in the late 1960s to help improve the United States school programs. Over the years, the model has been developed and applied in educational programs in the United States and other parts of the world (Stufflebeam, 2003). According to this model, the "purpose of an evaluation is not to prove but to improve" (p.118).

Additionally, this model is a comprehensive framework that can be used for formative and summative evaluations (Stufflebeam). Formative evaluation can be done during the instructional phase. In contrast, summative evaluation can be implemented at the end of the instructional course/ program to determine the quality of the teaching and learning process. In the latter, the evaluator uses this information to address the following retrospective questions: What needs were addressed? What procedural, staffing, and budgeting plan was adopted to address the needs? Was the service design executed competently and modified as needed? How did the various stakeholders judge the worth and merit of the outcomes, and to what extent were the needs of the target population met (product information)? (Stufflebeam & Shlnkfeld, 1985, p. 165).

CIPP is an acronym for context, input, process, and product. The context component is focused on what are the stakeholders' needs. What do they already know? What is the environment? It considers everything related to the context of the training program/ course. The input component considers what resources are part of the training program. The process component identifies the process of creating the training program. The product component asks if the training is sustainable (Stufflebeam, 2003). This study is concerned only with the context evaluation component.

## **2.2 Context Evaluation**

Context evaluation helps assess the needs and opportunities within a defined context or environment (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985). The objectives of context evaluation are to define, identify and address the needs of the target population, identify the problems and assess if the goals are responsive to the desired needs or not (Stufflebeam, 2003). Gabr (2001) implicitly referred to context evaluation in evaluating translation courses. He indicated that the evaluator should consider the timeliness and the length of the course, the appropriateness of the course, the objectives to the actual needs of students, the instructor's knowledge of the subject matter, and the appropriateness of the learning environment.

Gabr (2002) investigated the actual teaching and learning translation practices in Egyptian national universities at the undergraduate level. The results of teachers and students showed that learning and teaching translation need a systematic change. Gabr maintained that translator training programs should consider three types of needs assessment; market needs, translation department needs, and students' needs (as cited in Mahasneh, 2013). Additionally, Birjandi and Nosratinia (2009) evaluated the M.A. English Translation Program in nine universities in Iran. They adopted Stufflebeam's CIPP Model to evaluate the M.A. Translation programme. Regarding the (C) component, the context, their study focused on evaluating the students' language needs. The results showed that the translation programs did not provide students with the knowledge and skills to meet the labor market needs.

Amer (2013) focused on studying the achievements of the learning/teaching translation outcomes of the translation courses in the English Departments at the Palestinian universities in Gaza. He found out that the learning outcomes were fuzzy. One of the reasons behind the failure to achieve the learning outcomes was the inappropriateness of the context of these courses, including ambiguous objectives, like translation training was for professional purposes, which misled both teachers and students. Additionally, translation teachers were not qualified to teach the translation course, arbitrary approaches were followed in translation teaching, and there were no training courses for translation teachers. Moreover, Rezvani and Vakilinejad (2014) conducted an evaluative study to discover the degree to which the current curriculum of the Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) course was beneficial to students. The findings showed that all instructors were not satisfied with the objectives of this course since the course curriculum included some irrelevant objectives.

Furthermore, Al-Faifi (2000) evaluated and examined teaching translation at the undergraduate level of the language and translation program in Saudi Arabia. Results revealed that the teachers were not specialized in translation and had no experience in translation work. Also, the time allocated for translation courses was insufficient. Besides, the objectives of the translation courses were unclear. The context evaluation in this study has focused on summative evaluation of the objectives of the translation courses, students' linguistic competence before studying translation courses, students' needs, students' awareness of the course objectives, duration of the courses, classroom environment, and knowledge and qualifications of the teachers

### **3. Research Design**

The quantitative research method was adopted in this study. The quantitative method is a way to learn about a particular sample population, and it relies on data that are measured to examine questions about the sample population (Allen, 2017).

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study were (n=125) teachers and students from SUE, UoS, and UoD. They were (n=5) teachers who taught two translation courses to the sample of the students in the academic years (2016-2017) and (2017-2018), and (n=120) fourth-year students; (n=40) students from each university. According to Saldanha and O'Brien (2013), master's or final undergraduate students should participate in studies to produce translation findings. Thus, the students' sample was chosen from the fourth year since they studied two successive translation courses in the third and fourth years from English into Kurdish and vice versa in the academic years mentioned above. So, they were qualified to judge the effectiveness of the context of these courses.

#### **3.2 Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. After collecting the course books of the third and fourth years prepared by teachers of translation courses understudy, the researcher developed a close-ended questionnaire based on the C (context) component of Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP evaluation model.

Both teachers' and students' questionnaires were designed as parallel; the difference was only with items (#9 and #10) in the students' questionnaire. These items were developed to take students' perceptions regarding their teachers' qualifications and experience. Therefore, teachers' questionnaire included (n=8) main items, with (n=27) sub-items, and (n=10) main items, with (n=27) sub-items. Both questionnaires included five-point Likert scale items regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of the context of translation courses offered in the Departments of English. Each point on this scale was given a score for data analysis, i.e., (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neutral, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree.

The instrument was validated by (n=13) jury members who specialized in applied linguistics and translation. Coefficient reliability was measured and found to be (0.881) for the teachers' questionnaire and (0.884) for the students' questionnaire, which indicated reasonably high reliability, according to Mehren and Lehmann (1991).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

After collecting the data from teachers and students by the second semester, descriptive statistics methods (mean, standard deviation, weighted percentile, and percentage) were employed for the analysis. To find the cut score of the results, subject experts should set the cut score (Kellow & Willson, 2008). Thus, the researcher asked (n=10) teachers who have experienced teaching translation in the Departments of English to provide the average of a successful translation course. After receiving the averages, the researcher calculated their scores and found that the cut score was about (3.5). Thus, the findings above (3.5) were considered effective items since they achieved the level above the cut score. In contrast, the items below the cut score (3.5) were considered ineffective.

### **3.4 Results and Discussion**

To answer the first research question of the current study, "What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the context in teaching translation courses in the Departments of English, College of Languages at SUE, UoS, and UoD?", results revealed that the teachers were unsatisfied with most of the context items of translation courses since (37.5 %) of the items gained a level above the cut score, whereas (62.5%) obtained a level below the cut score. As illustrated in Table (1):

Table 1: Results of teachers' evaluation of the context of translation courses

No. of Items	Above the Cut Score		Below the Cut Score	
	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%
8	3	37.5	5	62.5

Following the second research question, "What are the students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the context in teaching translation courses in the Departments of English, College of Languages at SUE, UoS, and UoD?", results showed that students were unsatisfied with most of the context items of the translation courses since (20%) of the questionnaire items got a level above the cut score, whereas (80%) attained a level below the cut score, as illustrated in Table (2):

Table 2: Results of students' evaluation of the context of translation courses

No. of Items	Above the Cut Score		Below the Cut Score	
	No. of Items	%	No. of Items	%
10	2	20	8	80

As shown in tables (1) and (2), there is generally a consensus among teachers and students on the shortage of the context component. Teachers were satisfied with (37.5%) of the items, whereas students were satisfied with only (20%).

Both teachers and students agreed on some objectives/ learning outcomes of the translation courses, such as the translation courses improve students' English and Kurdish language skills, communication skills, knowledge of types of translation, cultural awareness, as well as the translation courses prepare students for translation careers. However, results showed that teachers and students had little satisfaction with the translation courses improving students' analytical and critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, these skills are neglected, although they are essential in teaching translation in English as a foreign language program to empower the 21st-century students with generic competence (Peverati, 2014).

Moreover, there was a discrepancy between teachers' and students' findings on some objectives, such as translation courses have acquainted students with different translation theories and strategies and prepared them for the interpreter career. The unclear objectives could be attributed to the lack of a well-organized formal curriculum document for the Departments of English to determine each course's objectives/ learning outcomes, the unfamiliarity of some teachers with the departments' objectives, and the variance of setting up objectives in the three universities. Besides, it could be related to the students' unfamiliarity with the objectives of the translation course mentioned in the course books, as reported in the results of item # 1 in the students' questionnaire. This finding is in agreement with Al-Faifi (2000), Amer (2013), and Rezvani and Vakilinejad (2014) since these studies indicate that the objectives of translation courses in the Departments of English were unclear and for professional purposes. Therefore, the translation courses that prepare students for the interpreting career may misguide them; they might expect to work as professional translators and interpreters after passing the translation courses of the Departments of English.

Regarding the situational context, teachers and students agreed on the inadequacy of the classroom environment and the inefficiency of the course time and duration. The former is related to the crowded classrooms due to the large number of students in each classroom compared to its size, especially in SUE and UoS. The latter is related to that: two hours per week and one translation class for two academic years were insufficient for teaching and learning translation. This finding aligns with Al-Faifi (2000), who found that the time allocated for the translation courses was insufficient. These can be considered constraints that hinder courses from achieving their objectives (Graves, 2000).

As to the objective needs, there was a discrepancy between teachers and students on the students' previous English and Kurdish language proficiency before studying translation. Teachers had high expectations regarding students' English proficiency level after studying the first- and second-year courses. These courses are assumed to empower students with excellent linguistic competence before studying translation

in the third year. However, students were unsatisfied with their knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary, writing, and reading comprehension, which are considered essential skills and sub-skills in studying translation.

Concerning translation teachers' knowledge and qualifications, many students agreed that their teachers had good knowledge of translation. However, they were unsatisfied with teachers' qualifications in teaching translation. This result is in agreement with Al-Faifi (2000) and Amer (2013) that teachers were unqualified for teaching translation since they were not specialized in translation. On the other hand, it is in disagreement with Al-Faifi (2000) that teachers had no experience in translation work.

## **5. Conclusions**

Based on the results obtained from the present study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The context of the translation courses in the Departments of English, Colleges of Languages at SUE, UoS, and UoD received little attention in designing and developing these courses.
2. Some objectives of the translation courses are unclear, and some are for professional purposes.
3. Translation teachers have good experience in translation work but have insufficient knowledge of teaching translation.
4. Translation teachers' expectations are higher than students' expectations and needs.
5. Students have insufficient linguistic competence before studying the translation course in the third year.
6. Generic skills are not considered in designing translation courses.
7. The units of the translation courses are insufficient for teaching and learning translation.
8. The duration of translation courses for two academic years is insufficient to learn translation skills.
9. The prescribed translation courses have not been constructed according to the students' needs.
10. Translation courses improve students' skills in translating texts from English into Kurdish but not from English into Kurdish.
11. A large number of students in the classroom constrain the translation courses from achieving their learning outcomes.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended to:

1. consider the context of the departments of English in designing and developing translation courses.
2. improve collaboration among the Departments of English at Colleges of Languages in Kurdistan universities to set up clear objectives and learning outcomes for translation courses offered in these departments.
3. create seminar workshops for the teachers who teach interrelated courses to discuss the student needs.
4. involve translation teachers in the training courses of teaching translation on the local and international levels.
5. redesign the components of the translation courses in the Departments of English according to the market needs in KRI.

6. consider the English courses in the first and second years to empower students with an excellent level of linguistic competence.
7. accept an adequate number of students in the departments of English to provide a positive learning environment for the students.
8. devote more hours to teaching translation courses since two hours per week are insufficient for students to acquire translation skills.

## References

- Allen, M. (2017). *The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods* (Vols. 1-4). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc doi: 10.4135/9781483381411
- Al-Faifi, A. (2000). *Teaching translation at the undergraduate level in Saudi Arabia: The case of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic university* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/10323>
- Amer, W. M. (2013). Teaching translation at Gaza universities: problems and solutions. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12358/25561>.
- Birjandi, P., & Nosratinia, M. (2009). The qualitative program evaluation of the postgraduate English translation major in Iran. *The Journal of Modern Thoughts in Education*, 4(4), 37–58.
- Gabr, M. (2001). Program evaluation: A missing critical link in translator training. *Translation Journal*, 5 (1).
- Graves, K. (2000). *Designing language courses: A guide for teachers*. Boston, MA, Heinle & Heinle.
- Hussain, A., Dogar, A. H., Azeem, M., & Shakoor, A. (2011). Evaluation of curriculum development process. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(14), 263-271.
- Kellow, J. T., & Willson, V. L (2008). Setting standards and establishing cut scores on criterion-referenced assessments some technical and practical considerations. In: J. Osborn (Ed.). *Best practices in quantitative methods*(pp. 15-28). Los Angeles, SAGE Publications.
- Ketlhointwe, M. J. (2006). *Course evaluation in adult education programmes: In support of environmental and sustainability education processes*. Howick: Southern African Development Community.
- Lewy, A. (1977). *Handbook of curriculum evaluation*. Paris: Unesco.
- Mahasneh, A. (2013). *Translation training in the Jordanian context: Curriculum evaluation in translator education* (Doctoral dissertation). New York, Binghamton University.
- Mehrens, W. A., & Lehmann, I. J. (1991). *Measurement and evaluation in education and psychology*. Belmont CA, Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Omer, Y. A. (2012). *Reassessing translation training programmes in Kurdistan universities at undergraduate level: Towards a new model of translator training programmes* (Doctoral dissertation). England, Aston University.
- Peverati, C. (2014). *Translation in university foreign-language curricula: an analysis of teachers' attitudes, with reference to vocational and transferability criteria* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: <https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/292368>
- Rezvani, R., & Vakilinejad, M. (2014). An evaluation of translation quality assessment course: voices from instructors. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1563-1571.
- Saldanha, G., & O'Brien, Sh. (2013). *Research methods for translation studies*. London, Routledge.

- Scriven, M. (1967) The methodology of evaluation. In R. W. Tyler (Ed.) *Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation* (pp.39-83). Chicago: Rand McNally
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2002). The CIPP model for evaluation. In: D. L. Stufflebeam, G. F. Madaus, T. Kellaghan (Eds.). *Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (pp. 279-317). New York, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). The CIPP model for evaluation. In: T. Kellaghan & D. L. Stufflebeam (Eds.), *The international handbook of educational evaluation*. (pp.31-62). Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Stufflebeam, D. L., & Shinkfield, A., J. (1985). *Systematic evaluation: A self-instructional guide to theory and practice*. Boston, Kluwer Academic Publisher.