



Translation in the Context of an Islamic Republic: Educational Surprises for Iranian Translators

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 05 May 2021 Revised: 26 June 2021 Accepted: 07 August 2021 Online: 14 January 2022</p>	<p>The present study is a qualitative research based on content analysis. The selection of the participants was based on the criterion-based sampling technique. The data collected for study was a semi-structured interview. The interview guide contained 12 questions designed in English, but sometimes Persian was used to facilitate communication. The "Grounded theory" method was used to analyze the data. Data analysis led to the presentation of a paradigm model. The paradigm model showed the role and function of "translation system" through causal conditions, contextual, intervention conditions, phenomena and consequences. This model revealed that social conditions cause translators' educational surprises in the process of translating some words and sentences into Persian. The research findings also showed the influence of the "gender" factor on the translator's practice. In addition, the research findings showed that each participant's reaction to the impact of causal, contextual, and intervention conditions were not the same. According to the paradigm model and findings, we can mention an "Iranian translation system" in which the translator's performance is more committed to the social systems' principles than to being faithful to the text. The findings also indicate that in the process of translation, Iranian translators face moral and behavioral restrictions that make them "educationally surprised". The current state of social systems in Iran shows that major changes in the "translation system" should not be expected to reduce the educational surprises of translators. In the current situation of Iran, one cannot expect major changes in social systems to reduce the educational surprises of translators.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Educational Surprises Iranian Translators Islamic Republic Translation</p>	

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1. Introduction

In the beginning, translation seems to be the simple conversion of words and phrases from one language to another, while many factors affect this process. In fact, these factors influence the translator's behavior, although she/he is not a passive and mindless person who wants to neutrally shift the components of one language to another. The translator does not live in a vacuum and acts as an "active mediator" in the translation process (Qahramani, 2014). For this reason, many professional translators are adamant that "A good translator is a traitor." Thus, the translated text inevitably carries the translator's voice and the arena of representation of her/his sexual, political, religious, cultural and educational identity. Based on this idea, Lefevere (2004) considers the translation process as a discourse act that forms a text in a systematic relationship with the network of contracts and decision-making institutions of the destination society. Simon (1996) also considers translation as a tool through which a critical understanding of social differences can be achieved. According to him, during the translation process, the translator rewrites and interferes the original text for certain purposes. It is obvious that some factors affecting the translator's behavior are common everywhere and some are limited to the translator's native environment. For example, the influence of translator's gender on translation can be cited as a common global factor.

By referring to some case studies, Simon shows that the translated text is the realm of the translator's sexual identity. He acknowledges that the translator selects some components and rejects others in a meaningful relationship with her/his gender. Through its choices, the translator provides an arena through which the voice and the effect of sexual identity can be heard (Ghahremani, 2015). In fact, the focus on gender is not only on the sexual identity of translators, but also on the sexual content of the text and issues such as sexual relations, the recognition of sexual minorities, and gender ethics (von Flotow, 2010). In this case, the translator is faced with questions that must know her/his answers and views about them. For example, can translators easily translate sexual words and sentences? Can they easily translate texts that recognize multiple sexual orientations? Can they translate texts that promote or deny equality between men and women in all aspects of life? The answer to these questions does not depend solely on the personal preferences of the translator and is influenced by cultural, religious, political and educational systems. Which of these factors is most important requires more research. Let us briefly mention the role of these social systems.

Role of the cultural system in translation is undeniable. However, there is no collective agreement on the definition, characteristics and dimensions of culture. Many experts agree that language reflects culture, and that the translator must know the culture of the "origin society" and the "target society" (Zhang, 2018). By choosing words, organizing sentences and attention to the context of society, the translator transmits a culture or prevents its promotion. Thus, to translate any sentence, the translator must be able to convey its true meaning in the target language in a way that is understandable. In other words, translators often and quickly recognize cultural words and concepts in the text because they are distant from the culture of the target language, are specific to the source language, and cannot be easily translated. However, a good translation is achieved when the translated text can have the same effect on the reader as the original text did on the source text reader (Thelen, 2008). But the fundamental question is whether the translator has the right to change words and sentences in favor of the cultural standards of the target society, and if so, to what extent. It is clear that in most cases determining whether the source society or the target society benefits in this process is a difficult task that largely depends on the translator's decision. In this regard, Ahmadi Arian (2015) believes that the position of the translator is much more important than the transmitter of knowledge: she/he is a cultural actor and the act of translation often takes the form of socio-political intervention and becomes problematic in the public arena.

Culture is also influenced by other systems such as religion and politics. In some societies, religious taboos and political restrictions do not allow the translator to translate some texts (Akan, Karim & Chowdhury, 2019). In this situation, the translator has to either refuse to translate some words and sentences or provide an inaccurate translation that fits the criteria of religious and political systems. In this situation, the translator must find a balance between fidelity to the text and loyalty to social systems. It is obvious that not every translator can find the balance position. This becomes especially difficult when the influence of social systems on the translator's life is stronger than her/his commitment to fidelity to the text. How to prove the influence of social systems? Part of the answer can be obtained by understanding the relationship between religious and political systems and educational system.

Traditionally, the education system has two main tasks: Training human resources and preserving the cultural heritage of society. Through the first task, educational centers, especially universities, train future translators. Through the second task, the young generation becomes acquainted with the religious, political and cultural values of the society and becomes committed to them. In this process, universities must train translators to adhere to the principles of social

systems in translation. Thus, the political and religious systems influence the behavior of translators through the educational system in two ways: First, by preventing translators from accessing resources whose content contradicts the beliefs of these two systems, and second, by changing the text in favor of the destination society (Al- Harahsheh, 2013). In both methods, what is mainly emphasized by social systems is that translation should not attack the culture of society. Figure 1 shows how a rotational process influenced by the beliefs, principles, and values that govern social systems leads to the formation of the "translation system." Thus, each society has its own translation system that distinguishes it from the translation system of other societies.

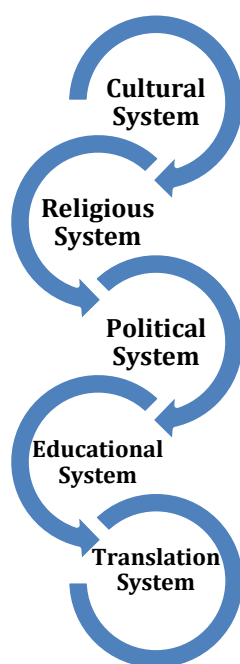


Figure 1: Impact of social systems on formation of translation system

Foreign language teaching and translation system in Iran has largely followed this pattern. In fact, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s, Iran's social systems underwent many changes. The Islamic Revolution promoted a cultural system based on two main principles: First, the rule of Islam in all aspects of life and, Second; the rejection of non-Islamic cultures (Cabi, 2020). The revolutionaries believed that the previous regime was culturally very Western. Therefore, they demanded the elimination of all Western manifestations - such as the teaching and promotion of Western languages - in the educational system. The revolutionaries believed that the previous regime was culturally very Western. Therefore, they demanded the elimination of all Western manifestations - such as the teaching and promotion of Western languages - in the

educational system. In fact, according to the revolutionaries, the colonial powers try to maintain their dominance through spread of their education, textbooks, language and culture (Keddie, 2006). To achieve this goal, the translation system is one of their main tools. However, the domination of the religious system over the political system in Iran caused major changes in the educational system. There were also difficulties in teaching and translating Western books that were in conflict with cultural, religious, and political values (Borjian, 2013; Davari, & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Davari, & Iranmehr, 2019; Davari, & Iranmehr, 2021). The result of this situation is the formation of a translation system during the last four decades, which can be referred to as the "Iranian translation system". In this system, translators could not translate the words and phrases of the text in a way that conflicts with the values and principles of social systems of local society. It is clear that this is simply not possible. Let me explain this further:

Higher education as part of the Iran's education system has tried to train translators to meet the needs of the society. Therefore, teaching foreign languages - especially English - is common in many universities in the country and they have separate departments, faculty members and students (Gholami, Arefi, Fathi Vajargah & Abolghasemi, 2017). While after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, many textbooks in universities - especially in the humanities sciences - changed in favor of the cultural, political and religious system (Givi, 2015), but this change was simply not possible in foreign language textbooks (Dahmardeh & Wray, 2011; Haddad-Narafshan & Yamini, 2011). In other words, many curricula in university's fields such as "English translation" are inevitably influenced by Western culture. Also, many of the novels and stories that students have to read and translate as their homework have non-Iranian authors and words and phrases that are not in line with Iran's social systems. This often surprises faculty members and students in translation process. Since these surprises are mainly related to issues that are in conflict with the pedagogical and behavioral structure of Iranians and cause them educational confusion in translation, we call them "educational surprises". For example, when a student encounters sexually related texts, words, and phrases, she or he is caught up in the educational surprise of how to translate from the original language (source language) to Persian (target language). The challenge for translators is to introduce students to these texts - which are not necessarily sexual texts and are novels or short stories by well-known authors. The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience of translation professors regarding the educational surprises they have encountered. Simultaneously, faculty members are challenged as to whether they should introduce these texts to students - which are not necessarily sexual texts and are only novels or short stories by well-known authors. Here we have a brief look at the findings of previous research:

Mohammed & Ibrahim, (2019) found some problems that face 7th semester translation students in translating expressions used by them in Islamic occasions. These problems are related to the voids in cultures, differences between both language styles and the lack of equivalences in English language. Chahrour, (2018) believes cultures cause a lot of problems that is why translators are required to be competent not just at the linguistic level, rather at the cultural level. In Jordan, Khammyseh (2015) tried to find the problems that face translation students in translating Islamic expressions in religious occasions into English language. These problems are related to the voids in cultures, differences between both languages styles and the lack of equivalences in English language. The causes of these problems that are proposed by the findings of the study are the lack of experience in the culture of the target language users, the lack of knowledge in both languages' structures and the lack of special references for the items. Dweik & Abu Helwah (2014) investigated the linguistic and cultural problems that Jordanian graduate students faced in rendering historical and religious texts from Arabic into English. They indicated various linguistic and cultural problems such as encountering structural, stylistic, lexical, punctuation errors and cultural terms. Guessabi, (2013) emphasis that translation is not only translating the words, meaning, and grammar, but it is also translating the behavior of the society and cultural customs. Language is a product of the thought and behavior of a society.

Recently one of the famous Iranian translators, Sarkohi (2020) admits that the translation of many novels from the original language into Persian not only contains many mistakes, but the translator deletes several pages of the original text and sometimes changed and even added sentences to the text. Bagheri & Fekri (2020) examining the challenges of Arabic-Persian translation in Iran's universities found that most teachers use the teacher-centered and traditional teaching method and are not familiar with new tools of translation education. Shah Nazari (2019) found that challenges in the translation of Islamic law texts could be classified into two groups: lexical challenges and structural challenges. Moreover, it was found out that the main challenges include Islamic words, culture-specific items, units of measurement, common words with uncommon meanings, fixed expressions, and modal verbs (p. 1). Amiri & Rabbani Yekta, (2019) through an ethnographic study discovered current challenges of Translation profession in Iran such as dictionary use, finding an equivalent and word selection, lack of facilities, students' reluctance, demotivation, and high expectation, unexpected situations, content knowledge and general information, students' general English proficiency, and know-it-all students. Kafi, Khoshsaligheh &

Hashemi, (2018) investigate current challenges and future prospects of Translation profession in Iran and found numerous administrative, educational, social and financial challenges. Yousefi, (2017) attempted to study effect of religious beliefs on quality of translation. Two groups of Muslim and non-Muslim translators were selected and each of them translated 5 Islamic-religious texts, after assessing the quality of translations and doing statistical analyses, researcher concluded that there was no relation between the quality of translations and the religious beliefs of translators. Ganjian Khanari (2018) with an analytical study of the components of Arabic texts believes that the challenges of translators are related to three areas of words, idiomatic interpretation and structure, while idiomatic interpretation is more related to the heritage and linguistic tradition and history of nations. Gholami, Arefi, Fathi Vajargah & Abolghasemi, (2017) found that teachers' beliefs and opinions about teaching are different from their action in the classroom. This gap is influenced by factors such as inadequate facilities, cultural factors, and lack of coordination in curriculum and the content of school textbooks. Amoozgar & Goodarzpour Iraq (2016) by examining the problems of translating books related to the literature of the Iran-Iraq war into German language found that translating some phrases requires a great deal of explanation for non-Iranian readers. In summary, a few points can be mentioned. First, translation is influenced by the translator's personality and the social systems that surround him. Second, social systems influence each other and also all play a role in shaping the translation system. Third, the translation system in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been influenced by revolutionary social systems. Fourth, little research has been done on the educational surprises that occur for Iranian translators. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the educational surprises of Iranian translators with regard to the context of the Islamic Republic. The sub-objectives of the research are:

- Identify the factors affecting the educational surprises of translation
- Presenting a paradigm model of the components of educational surprise

2. Research Method

The present study is a qualitative research based on content analysis. The study was conducted at English Department, Jieroft Islamic Azad University during the academic years 2019-2020. The participants of study were 19 Iranian students enrolled in the graduate program of translation. They were of both sexes, aged between 21 and 28 years old. The selection of the participants was based on Targeted sampling method. The major reason why these people were selected is the fact that they had already studied many specialized courses including language skills courses, grammar

courses, linguistics, syntax and English and Persian language structure and writing courses. They had also completed at least two courses in translation. The assumption was that these students had necessary linguistic knowledge, both theoretical and practical, and a cultural bilingual background, achieved during their four years in college. The sample size was based on theoretical saturation as no new information was obtained through the research instrument. The data collected for study was a semi-structured interview based on the guidelines and tips in literature. A semi-structured interview could provide flexibility for participants to elaborate on the points of each question that are meaningful to them, thereby driving the conversation even deeper (Gibson, 1998). The interview contained 6 questions designed in English, but sometimes Persian was used to facilitate communication. Interview duration fluctuated between 30 to 72 minutes. Prior to the interview, four paragraphs from Salinger's book "The Catcher in the Rye" were given to them to translate to Persian. These paragraphs contained explicit sexual and vulgar words. In the next step and after collecting their translations, the interviewee was asked to express their feelings and opinions about the educational surprises of translating these paragraphs and why they did not translate some words or did not translate accurately. The "Grounded theory" method was used to analyze the data. This method is suitable for a situation about which our knowledge is limited and there is no significant theory for it based on which a hypothesis for the test can be formulated. This is especially true for the subject of the present study. In order to assess the reliability of the data, the "Inter Coder Reliability method" was used.

3. Findings

This section contains qualitative results using the "grounded theory" method. One of the advantages of grounded theory is the use of an analytical tool namely "paradigm". The paradigm organizes the findings and ultimately increases its explanatory power. It includes three parts of conditions, action/interaction, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Conditions can arise from time, place, culture, rules, beliefs, economics, power, social world, and organizations. Action / reaction refer to those strategic or routine tactics that people use to deal with situations, issues and problems. This part of the paradigm shows what people, organizations, and the social world do or say. Action / reaction include not only what is going on between people, but also show group discussions and conversations. In relation to action / reaction, conditions take three states: 1- causal 2- interventional and 3- contextual (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 131). Wherever there is action / reaction, there are usually consequences. Consequences can be wanted or unwanted. Explaining the consequences can help clarify the phenomenon under study. Consequences can have internal

properties as well as conditions. They may be single or multiple, visible or invisible, and have a limited or extensive effect (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 134). Findings from the interviews indicate that in the open coding stage 17 basic concepts, in the axial coding stage 6 major categories and in the selective coding stage 1 core concept were extracted. In the next section, the six main categories are explained in order to find how the core category is formed:

Table 1: Results of the three steps of open, axial and selective coding

Concepts	Categories	Core Concept
1. Cultural factor 2. Religious factor 3. Political factor 4. Educational factor	Causal Conditions	Educational surprise
1. Public climate in the field of "English translation" 2. University climate	Contextual Conditions	
1. Gender of faculty members 2. Students' gender	Interventional Conditions	
1. Freelance translators 2. Translation companies	Phenomenon: Emergence of competitors strategies	
1. Acceptance 2. Resistance 3. Submission		
1. Preserving social values 2. Decreased translation quality 3. Increased frustration among students 4. Decreasing the quality of training	consequences	
Number of concepts and categories: 17	6	1

A) Causal Conditions

Data analysis indicates the existence of four causal conditions or factor influencing the change in students' behavior in the translation process. Culture was the first factor that attracted the attention of the majority of participants. For example, look at the words of some students:

"You know better, our culture does not allow us to say and write everything. This culture has always been with us" (Participant # 6)

"Iranian and Islamic culture is a veil of modesty, and therefore sometimes we have to use words in translation that show more decency" (Participant # 11)

"Well, I'm personally embarrassed to say or write some words. So it's better to translate something I can defend. Our family culture does not allow it" (Participant #14)

Data analysis shows that participants do not have the same definition of culture and various examples such as Iranian culture, Islamic culture and family culture can be considered for it. It also seems to be a familiar and common but undefined mental perception about culture which prevents the Iranian translator from being completely faithful to the text. The second factor that some participants - especially female students - consider in the translation process is the impact of religion.

"From the Islamic point of view, speaking and writing and explaining sexual relations between a man and a woman is definitely Makrooh if it is not Haram" (Participant #3)

"Here in Iran I don't think a translator can translate every word and sentence. Islam does not allow it. I can't go to hell for the sake of others. Anyone who likes to read the original text of a foreign novel should go and learn that language". (Participant #19)

Data analysis indicates that some students generally refuse to translate topics such as girl-boy relationships, illegitimate relationships between men and women, homosexuality, sexual obscenities, gender equality, and the description of love scenes due to religious prohibitions and taboos.

The third factor or condition effect the translation system is the role, influence and supervision of the political system on the process of translating and publishing books and journals. The political system in Iran is strongly intertwined with the religious system. In fact, the religious system dominates the political system. For this reason, the political system supports Islamic values and standards in all matters of life, including educational policies. According to the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all publishers must obtain a "publication License" from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. This is also reflected in the students' words:

"Well, our country is an Islamic republic and everything must be Islamic. The government also has its own laws. Well, the law does not allow the translation and printing of some things" (Participant #4).

"A translator in any country must consider the rules. Of course, I may translate a story for myself, but I do not have the right to publish it without the permission of the Ministry of Guidance" (Participant # 13).

The fourth factor is the adaptation of the translation content to the pedagogical frameworks of the society. In the introduction section of paper, it was said that the educational system is influenced by other social systems. This is especially true in the case of Iran. Thus, the educational system affects the behavior of the translator in two ways. First, it forces her/him to refrain from translating certain words and phrases based on the pedagogical values of the society, and second, it determines the educational resources used by faculty members and students in advance.

"You know what ... translating some words and sentences without considering the pedagogical principles is a difficult task and it is not up to us" (Participant # 1)

B) Contextual conditions

Contextual conditions refer to the social and educational environment in which the translator is located. Data analysis indicates the two contextual conditions of the general climate at field of English Translation and the climate of universities. Regarding the first condition, one of the participants says:

"Classroom atmosphere and the presence of male and female students do not in principle allow us to translate inappropriate text and read it aloud" (Participant # 10)

Two interviewees also refer to the university atmosphere:

"Well, of course, for students in the field of English Translation, reading and translating some words in foreign novels or stories is somewhat normal, but in principle, the university atmosphere and its sanctity must be observed" (Participant #9)

"The university decides on the books and textbooks. Of course, the professors also play an important role and pay attention to the content of the texts" (Participant # 5).

C) Interventional Conditions

Participants mention two factors that interfere with the translation process. The first is the gender of the faculty members and the second is the gender of the students. Let us pay close attention to what the students are saying:

"I think female professors are less inclined to provide students with resources that are sexually explicit" (Participant #11).

"Whenever the teacher is a woman, I am very careful in translating some words" (Participant # 14).

"See, of course how can it be said When the teacher is a woman and the class is full of female students, I am not very comfortable translating and reading some words" (Participant #16).

D) Phenomenon: Emergence of Competitors

The phenomenon refers to the occurrence of a situation in which translation takes place without considering the impact of social systems. In fact, participants were asked how to trust the translation system in Iran, given the role of causal, contextual, and interventional conditions. Their response indicated the entry of competitors facing universities and the educational system. Translation pays attention to the right of customer and the customer seeks accurate translation.

"We at the university cannot translate every word and text, but translators outside the university can" (Participant # 7).

"Private institutions teach English to people. They are free of rule and regulations. Their instructors can read and translate any story they want. There is not much strictness. Of course, they cannot publish every novel or story, but they can at least teach students "(Participant # 8).

E) Strategies

Strategy refers to the methods and mechanisms that translators use to accept or avoid translating inappropriate sentences and words. The analysis of the interviews shows that students use three strategies of acceptance, resistance and submission:

"I think the translator should be neutral. What is written in the text does not make me responsible. The translator should not distort the sentences and words of the original text" (Strategy of Acceptance) (participant #6).

"In all written scientific sources, the translator is an active actor. I will never translate some words and sentences" (Strategy of Resistance) (participant #1).

"You know, translation depends on a lot of things, but if I want to be honest with you, sometimes I consider the reader's right, but in most cases I am careless and look at the social situation" (Strategy of Submission) (participant #19).

F) Consequences

In response to the question about the consequences of the impact of social systems on the translation system in Iran, participants pointed to the four consequences of maintaining social values, reducing the quality of translation, increasing frustration among students and reducing the

quality of education. Some of the interviewees believed that attention to the standards governing social systems would prevent the transfer of inappropriate values from other societies to Iran:

"We cannot ignore our social values under the pretext of fidelity in translating. The authors of many novels and short stories adhere to Western values" (participant #3).

A group of participants emphasized the negative consequences:

"The main thing is that we want to know what the world is up to or not. That we measure translation by our own standards and distort the meaning of words is just a source of discouragement and deception". (Participant # 10)

"I disagree with accepting that readers are people who lack the ability to distinguish right from wrong and decide to delete words or change their meaning instead. This destroys the originality of the translation". (Participant # 12)

"Every scientific discipline has its own principles and rules and should be subject to non-scientific conditions. Is a physician subject to social conditions in his scientific activity? This sacrifices the quality of science and translation to non-scientific criteria". (Participant # 2)

These concepts and categories have led to the formation of a core category namely "educational surprise" among translators (Figure 1). Educational surprise indicates a situation that puts the translator in a conflict between fidelity to the text and loyalty to social norms. This surprise is evident in the words of many participants:

"Many times I procrastinate in translating homework because I want to find a word that conveys the meaning but is not vulgar" (Participant #15).

"I think we translators in Iran always suffer from a guilty conscience" (Participant #17).

"Well ... in fact, translating literature texts is difficult. Everywhere we look, the pros and cons of loyalty to the text have strong reasons." (Participant # 8)

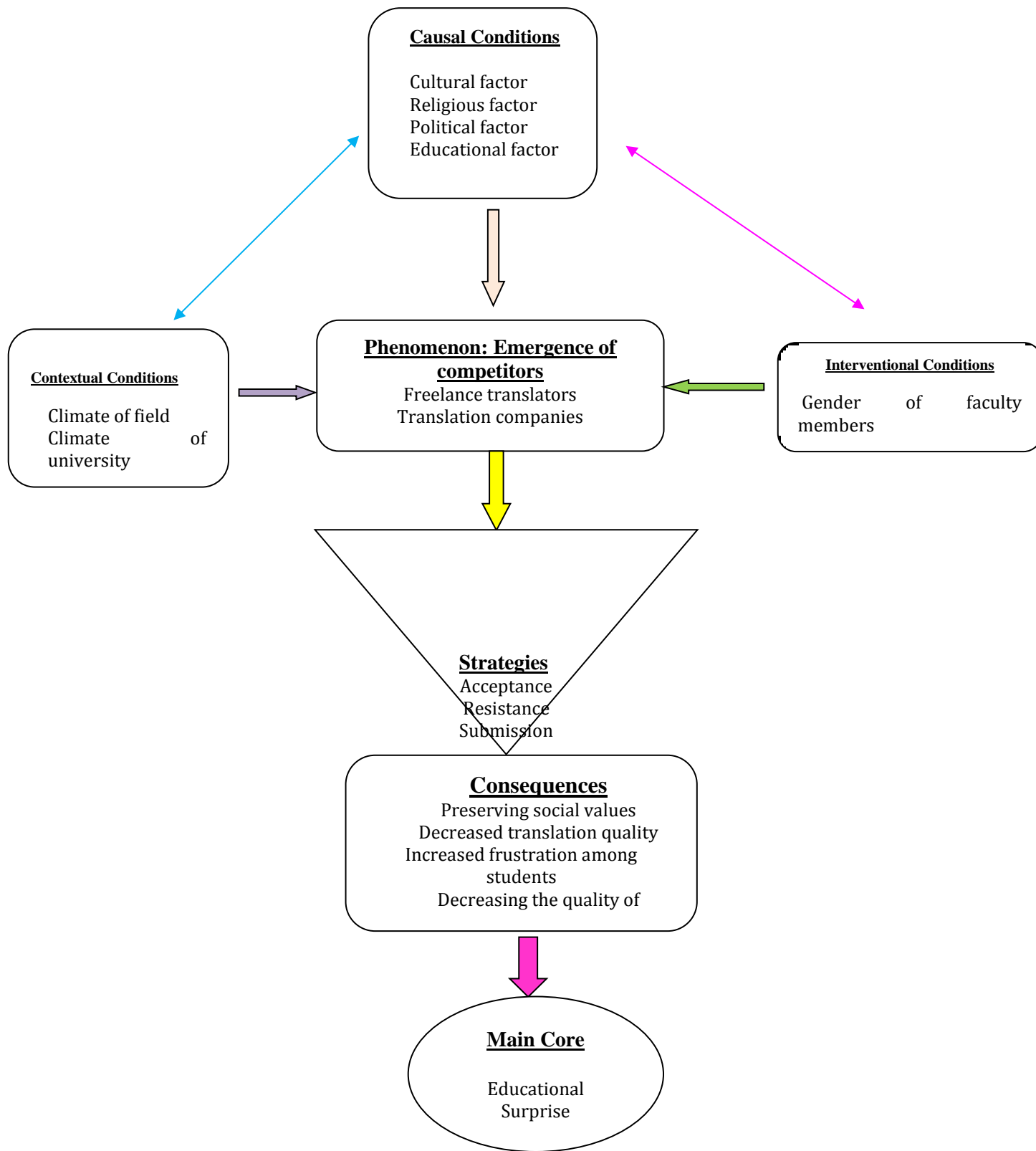


Figure 1. A Paradigm model for educational surprises process of translators in Iran

4. Conclusion

Translation in all human societies is influenced by social considerations. However, the impact of social systems on translation is mainly focused on the richness of translation to help the reader. Thus, the impact of social systems on the translation system is mostly positive and makes translators more comfortable. This may be due to the minimal involvement of cultural, political and educational systems in the translation process. In contrast, in some societies the impact of social systems on translation is mainly negative and deterrent. In an Islamic Republic context, the translator must be at the service of social systems. In fact, it is the translator's duty to observe social restrictions and taboos in the translation process. Under these circumstances, translation is a tough activity and the translator is subject to mental contradictions. Based on this thought, the main idea of the present study was to understand the educational surprises that Iranian translators face in the translation process. According to the purpose of the research, the paradigm model depicts the activities of the participants (as actors) in the context of an Islamic republic to rethink the practice of translation. The present researcher tried to demonstrate the role and function of the translation system in Iran through a paradigm model and five sections: causal, contextual, intervening conditions, phenomena, and consequences. The model also showed that social factors surprise translators in the translation process. In addition, the findings showed the influence of the "gender" factor on translation. This factor affects both the behavior of faculty members and students in translation process. In addition, the research findings revealed that participants' reactions to the impact of causal, contextual, and interventional conditions were not the same. Some participants convert the source text into the target language without any interference. Some of them consider themselves entitled to any change in the text, and some have taken the middle way. The findings also indicate that the effect of causal, contextual, and intervening conditions on the translation system was mainly accompanied by negative consequences. According to the paradigm model, we can mention an "Iranian translation system" in which the translator's activity in the translation process is more committed to social systems' principles than to being faithful to the original text. Based on this, present study support the findings of Qahramani (2015), Sarkohi (2020), Bagheri & Fekri (2020), Shahnazari (2019), Ganjian Khanari (2018) and Amoozgar, & Goodarzpour Iraq, (2016). In a nutshell, there is no quick and clear solution for Iranian translators to find a balance between social commitment and fidelity to the text. Also, it seems changing the current situation and reducing the impact of social systems on translation depends on strengthening the "translation system" through the expansion of translators' unions and NGOs.

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