



## The Effect of Translators' Payment on the Quality of Translations: A Sociological Perspective of Translation Quality

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the payment's impact on the quality of translated products, an area that has been largely overlooked in translation sociology. Drawing on Actor-Network-Theory, the study analyzed recent translations by 10 Iranian freelance and agency translators with over five years of translation experience in the market. Participants provided the researchers with translations completed for low and good payments, which were evaluated using the Waddington (2001) model. Interviews were conducted to gather the participants' opinions with regard to the Iranian translation market. Despite dissatisfaction with low payment and the unjust translation market, most translators produced high-quality translations. However, the unjust market frustrated translators and led many to leave their jobs. The findings suggest that while low payment does not necessarily negatively affect translation quality, it can significantly impact the job satisfaction and retention of translators. This study sheds light on the economic aspect of translation and has important implications for the translation industry.

Keywords: Actor-network Theory, Agency Theory, Translation Market, Translators' Payment, Translation Quality

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## Introduction

One of the purposes of conducting sociological research in Translation Studies (TS) is to highlight the neglected “position of translators” in the translation process and society (Liu, 2012). However, this is not the only objective behind the study of translation from a sociological viewpoint. As a branch of Descriptive Translation Studies, the main task of translation sociology is to describe the function of translation within society and the different social factors that might influence both the translation process and the product (Munday, 2016). Chesterman (2006) asserts that the significance of the sociological approach to translation lies in the emphasis it puts on translation practice, that is, how the translator and other agents involved in the task of translation act and what the relationships between these agents are. Two conclusions might be sought from Chesterman’s statement. Firstly, the translator is not alone in shaping the final product of the translation but is only one agent among other agents involved in the task of commissioning a translation project. Secondly, in different situations, translators might act differently. Sociologically speaking, many factors influence translators and their products. Bourdieu’s (1977) “Habitus” and “Capital” (e.g., social, cultural, and economic) are only two of these factors. While some of these sociological factors have been well-researched in TS, some others have been neglected. For instance, the concepts of ‘Habitus’, ‘Ideology’, ‘Power’, and ‘Structure’ or what is technically called ‘Field’, have been well-studied by researchers in TS and neighboring disciplines. Looking at TS literature from a sociological viewpoint will reveal that the economic factor has almost been neglected or has not been studied as a separate category deserving special attention. Nonetheless, a significant element of the translation industry today is the financial aspect. The translation industry today has grown much bigger and has radically changed; as Abdallah (2012) declares, translators’ working conditions have transitioned from the simple dyadic relationship between a client and a translator in which the translator was considered an expert to that of production networks which involve the participation of several agents or more precisely subcontractors which work in a chain. Abdallah (2012) further believes that the production networks have been established due to the ever-increasing and ever-profitable business of the translation industry. Therefore, as it appears, the financial factor is a big motivator for the agents involved in the production networks. Nonetheless, despite its importance, the financial aspect has been neglected.

Among the few researchers who have generally touched upon this area, Abdallah (2012) acknowledges that the translators’ workplaces, scientifically termed ‘translation ergonomics’, is an under-researched study area. However, the term workplace is broad and involves many factors, one of which is the economic factor which is the focus of the present study. Although an under-researched area of study, the economy of translation has been emphasized by TS theorists, prominent of which are Heilborn and Sapiro (2007) who in a study proposed three areas to be covered in sociological TS. These are “the field of international relations of exchange”, “the political, economic, and cultural dynamics,” and “the dynamics of reception by intermediaries, such as translators, critics, agents and publishers”.

There have been some sporadic studies on translators’ income. Studying the economic conditions of literary translators in the US, Venuti (2002) concluded that the translators are being misused and repressed by the publishers and that their lot is, in a word, miserable. He believes the miserable lot goes back to the translator’s weak role in the network. This example is a good start for initiating studies in the economy of translation. However, it is both limited to the literary market and does not make arguments beyond the translator’s income.

Nonetheless, if we want a bigger picture of the complex economic factor, we need to study it in relation to other variables, such as the translated product, process, and the potential effect it might exert on the said variables. An important variable that the present study focuses on is ‘translation quality’.

Emphasizing the complexity and the malleability of the concept, Gambier (2023) claims that translation quality depends on a myriad of factors, including the fees translators receive for their job. However, this remains a weak hypothesis, unless supported by empirical studies. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has specifically explored the impact of the financial factor on the product. Concentrating on the translation market in Iran (with a strong emphasis on freelancing), the present study attempts to fill the mentioned gap by studying the possible effects of the translators' financial lot on their translation quality. In other words, it explores whether the fees translators receive for their translations affect the quality of their work.

There could be multiple reasons for conducting such studies. Firstly, building on Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) proposed by the celebrated French sociologist Latour (1996), "anything that has the power to act and to affect others can be an actor" (Callon, 1986, as cited in Abdallah, 2012) including money. Consequently, the financial factor is an actor that can affect the human agent, the translator in our case. Secondly, as Abdallah (2012) believes, translation quality is not well-defined in the translation market or the production networks. Moreover, she concludes that the disagreement over quality is susceptible to network breakdown and the disappointment of the actors involved in translation networks. Therefore, it seems highly important to investigate the factors that lead to the deterioration of translation quality. Thirdly, as they reveal some aspects of the true nature of the sociological process of the translation market, the results could be helpful for translation companies, organizations that outsource their work to translators, individual clients, and subcontractors (that can be translators) in better planning their economic deals.

The present research has a dependent variable and an independent variable. The dependent variable is translation quality, and the independent variable is the money the translator receives as a fee for carrying out a translation project (which could be any text ranging from a one-page paper to an extended text). Therefore, this study investigates the impact of the money variable on the quality variable. In other words, the purpose is to determine whether the fees translators receive for their job affect the quality of their translations. Herein, quality is measured according to Waddington's (2001) translation quality assessment (TQA) model, which will be elaborated on in the methodology section. More specifically, the researchers attempt to determine whether quality deteriorates when translators receive low fees.

According to the said purposes, the paper is an attempt to respond to the following two questions:

1. Do the fees translators receive for their job affect the quality of their translations?
2. Does the quality deteriorate when translators receive low fees?

## Literature Review

The present study builds upon the well-documented theory in sociology called ANT. Proposed in 1984 by Bruno Latour, this theory analyzes social acts in their contexts of inception. According to ANT, an act which at first sight might appear to be functioning individually could be affected by a myriad of external factors. Therefore, to have a more accurate picture of any social act (including translation), we need to situate it within the context from which it aroused. A more important feature of the theory, which prompted the present research, is that an actor is not only human, but it could be non-human. Non-human actors whom, in the context of translation, could be anything ranging from money and technology to a skill could be argued to influence the translator's job, including the final product of the translation. Building on the potential relationships between human and non-human actors proposed by the ANT, the hypothesis of the present study emerged. The current study is built on the premise that the fees translators receive for their work might affect their products for the better or the worse,

depending on the amount of income they are paid; if translators are paid good enough, they might produce high-quality translations, and if they are paid less, they are susceptible to produce low-quality translations.

The translation industry is an important economic player at a global level. It is a fast-growing service sector in terms of volume and turnover, which has proliferated over the past few years. There have been a good number of studies on the general status of the translation market around the world as well as the economic conditions of the translators (Abdallah, 2007, 2010, 2011; Austermühl, 2005; Chan, 2005; Dam & Korning Zethsen, 2008; Jääskeläinen, 2007; Moorkens, 2017; Sennett, 2007). For example, researching the status of the translation market in Slovenia, Fišer (2008) showed that from 2004 to 2006, the Slovenian's translation industry enjoyed a 3% annual growth, still less than the European average. Based on research and consulting firm specializing in the online and offline operations driving business globalization, internationalization, translation, and localization, the Common Sense Advisory has estimated the worldwide translation and localization services market in the US as \$8.8 billion (DePalma & Beninatto, 2005). China witnessed unparalleled growth in the translation industry. The Chinese translation output in 2005 was estimated to be around 20 billion Yuan (2.5 billion US Dollars). Nonetheless, the Chinese translation market is far from being smooth and even. The same researchers confirm that translation companies in China vary significantly in scale, management, and price since there are no stringent entry requirements in place; the pay rate fluctuates greatly from region to region, from case to case. Furthermore, they point out that the low professional status of translation in China and the prevailing misconception that anyone who speaks two languages can translate opened up the door for unqualified people to enter the translation market and deliver poor translation products, which in turn led to low recognition and low payment to professional translators. In Germany, the most populated country in European Union, 9,447 companies are working in this category, of which 9,040 companies have a turnover of over 17,500 Euros and 407 companies enjoy a turnover of over 250,000 Euros (Olohan, 2007). Parker (2008) claims that the potential translation market in Germany is 4.27 percent of the world's total. Investigating the translation market of the United Kingdom, which comprises four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, Olohan (2007) admits that the 'translation and interpreting services' enjoyed an overall increase of 6.2% in the cost from 2000 to 2005.

As to translation rates in the private as well as the freelancing market Table 1 shows the average rates per word as reported by ProZ.com's community of freelance translators and translation companies for some of the most spoken language pairs in the world (as well as Farsi) (ProZ.com, 2023). The rates below are based on the international market.

Table 1. Average translation rates per word as reported by ProZ.com

<u>Language Pair</u>	<b>Avg. Rates per Word</b>		<b>Sample Size</b>
	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	
English to Arabic	\$0.10/wd	\$0.08/wd	6712
English to Chinese	\$0.10/wd	\$0.07/wd	7818
English to French	\$0.11/wd	\$0.09/wd	7781
English to Spanish	\$0.11/wd	\$0.08/wd	20355
English to Persian (Farsi)	\$0.09/wd	\$0.07/wd	1110

\*sample size above refers to the number of translators who reported the rates.

Another leading international website, Translators Café (2023), reports rates per each country. For instance, for the language direction English > Arabic in the US, Egypt, and France the rates are \$0.12,

\$0.08, and \$0.11, respectively. As to the language direction English > Spanish in the US, Spain, and Argentina (where more respondents reported their rates) the rates are reported to be \$0.10, \$0.08, and \$0.07 per word, respectively. With regard to English > Persian (Farsi) the rates are reported to be \$0.10, \$0.10, and \$0.07 in The US, UK, and Iran, respectively. In fact, regarding the rates in the language pair English/Farsi, these are charged by translators registered and working at Translator's Café and ProZ.com. Hence, they are not true about the translators who are working with other agencies or on a freelance basis (as the translators in our study). Generally, the standard translation rates per word for the language direction English > Persian amounts to € 7 which equals IRR 30,000 (0.7096 USD).

In Iran, the rates for the direction English > Persian ranges between 100 Rials and (0.023655 USD) 300 Rials (0.070964 USD) as reported by Motarjemshodan (2023) and The Research Institute for Translation Studies (2023), respectively. According to the statistics above, translation rates in Iran are between 33 and 21 times lower than the international rates.

As far as the researchers are aware, no specific study has exclusively examined the impact of the translators' financial conditions on the translation quality variable. Most studies previously mentioned did not specifically examine the effect of the economic factor on the quality of translation. The related literature reveals a gap in this regard. Nevertheless, a pioneer in this area is Kristina Abdallah, who has conducted several studies on translators' workplaces in Finland that shed light on translators' working conditions, recognized the complications and faults within the translation industry, and ultimately provided solutions for the enhancement of the translators' working conditions. In a longitudinal study on eight Finnish translators who worked in "production networks," which encompasses many actors, including the translation company, the client company, the translator, and the actual client or the reader, Abdallah (2010) found that lack of support (i.e., financial support) for the translators is one of the factors that discouraged translators from creating high-quality translations. Dissatisfied with the income they received for their work, the interviewees (translators) believed they did not need to produce high-quality translations when they were paid less than they deserved. When asked about the reasons for low quality, a freelance translator expressed his view in the following manner:

*"This is not my fault; they don't pay me by the hour; why should I worry about it as no one seems to care"* (Abdallah, 2010).

The fact that translators are being abused in the market by being paid low wages had previously been confirmed by Chan (2005) and Jääskeläinen (2007). However, the studies in this regard are very few, and except Abdallah (2010), no other researcher has investigated the impact of the economic factor on the quality of the product. Abdallah (2007, 2011) has investigated translation quality from different angles. Conducting a survey in the subtitling industry in the private sector in Finland, Abdallah (2011) found that subtitled products mostly suffered from translation quality issues. The study associated the deteriorating quality with factors such as a lack of agreed-upon definition of quality and the translators' powerlessness "in defending their rights and their definition of quality" (Abdallah, 2012).

An important point to be borne in mind is that every country has a unique economic condition. Therefore, the results gained in some countries cannot be simply generalized to other parts of the world. In the Iranian context, few studies have explored the Iranian translators' economic conditions. Investigating the status of the translation profession in Iran, Kafi et al. (2018) documented some failings in the Iranian translation market. These were administrative challenges, issues of social status, academic and educational issues, issues related to translators and other translation agents, and economic challenges. In an M.A. concerning the status of the translation publishing market in Iran and the opinions of B.A. translation students on the translation publishing market, Askary (2017) reported that the students were worried about entering the translation market due to the financial insecurity, low rates, and challenges with receiving the payment. In the same vein, Mirsafian et al. (2019) reported



a number of factors that influence literary translators' income (economic capital) including received awards, membership in the jury of awards and the editorial board of literary magazines as well as experience.

The three studies mentioned above examined the economic factor in the translation market without investigating its potential impact on other factors, such as translation quality. This gap is to be accounted for in the present study.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The present study adopts a qualitative empirical approach. It is qualitative because part of the data is collected through semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the object of the study is not well-known in the field, and few studies have been conducted on the subject. The impact of one variable on another variable is explored. That is, the potential impact of the payment on translation quality is investigated. To this end, we selected our participants from LinkedIn platform, where professionals (both employees and employers) create profiles and connect with each other in an online social network which allows job seekers to post their CVs and employers to post job positions. The researchers visited LinkedIn through the corresponding author's account and searched for Iranian freelance translators who had an account in LinkedIn. To delimit the data and make the search process more convenient, only translators who were employed at Tarjomic, the most comprehensive platform for providing translation services and other language services in Iran were selected. The main criteria for the selection of translators was that they had at least five years of continuous work experience as translators. The translators who met this qualification were connected to, then, when they became among the network members of the researcher's account, they were sent an invitation to participate in the study. In the invitation, the purpose as well as the required data were described, and they were asked if they could provide the researchers with the required data. They needed to provide the researchers with at least four translations (along with their source texts) that they carried out during the current year (i.e. 2023). Furthermore, as the research attempts to compare the translation quality of translations carried out under different financial conditions, that is, those carried out for good fees and those carried for low fees, the participants were asked to provide the researchers with some translations done for good payment, payment that they considered deserves their effort, and some translations for which they received less money than they deserved. However, as is explained in the following sections, it was difficult to obtain such structured data as some translators did not accept works with low fees, while others were unsatisfied with the wages they have received for all the works that they have done so far. These issues made it more difficult to collect enough data.

As to the number participants, very few translators consented to send their translations. Most of them refrained from sharing their translations because they had either signed a contract with the translation agency not to share the translations or they felt committed to their clients (in cases where the translations were not done for an agency). Out of the 49 translators who were sent an invitation only 10 accepted to share their translations. The rest rejected sharing their data because they felt committed to both the translation companies and their clients and they saw it disloyal and unethical to share the translations which in some cases contained personal information of the clients.

After the researchers received the required translations from the participants via e-mail, the translations were saved in a computer file, with each file named after the participant's name.

In addition to assessing the quality of the translations, semi-structured interviews were administered with each translator so as to gain an insight of the translators' satisfaction with the translation market generally and the translation fees specifically. Semi-structured interviews are conversations in which

the interviewer knows what s/he is looking for using a set of questions to cover, but the structure of the conversation is flexible and may vary for different interviewees (Fylan, 2005). The participants were asked to provide the researchers with information about the payment of the translations they sent. In addition to the oral conversation conducted with the interviewees, some of them annotated the sent file with brief statements about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the fees they received for the translations, and some wrote via social media platforms (e.g., e-mail and WhatsApp) about their feelings about the payments they received. Here is one comment by a participant who was a Ph.D. candidate in TS and a professional translator. The comment is a direct quotation in Persian.

(1) من از دستمزد هیچکدام راضی نبودم، جز یکدونه که چکیده بود.

was abstract that one except none was dissatisfied payment from I  
فقط از دستمزد اون راضی بودم. اون چکیده ۷۰ تومن بود.  
was ۷۰ that abstract Tomans I was satisfied payment that from only  
بقیه ترجمه‌ها حدود ۲۰۰ تومن اینا. کلاً از پول ترجمه  
translation money from totally about 200 Tomans other translations  
راضی نیستم و انجام نمیدم دیگه.  
anymore not do and not content

'I was not satisfied with the payment of neither of the translations I did, except one, which was an abstract. I received 1.67 \$ for that abstract. The rest of the translations were about 4.76 \$. I'm not satisfied with the money I receive for translations, and I don't translate anymore.'

After this initial phase of the data collection process, the researchers had to determine the quality of each of the translations to later compare it with the translators' degree of satisfaction with the payment they received. The data were evaluated with the help of Waddington's model of TQA. The model will be explained below. However, this will be preceded by a brief description of the participants and the main data of the study (i.e., the translations).

#### Participants and Data

As illustrated in Table 1, the study obtained the required data from ten purposefully selected translators who are both freelancers and agency translators (4=male and 6=female) with at least five years of continuous experience in the translation market. Due to anonymity reasons, they are called translators A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. The four male translators are named A, B, C, and D. The six female translators, on the other hand, were named E, F, G, H, I and J (See Table 2).

Table 2. Participants of the Study

Male Translators	Particulars	Female Translators	Particulars
1.Translator A	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed freelance translator since Dec. 2013 (9 yrs 4 mos)/ <b>Education:</b> Ph.D. candidate in Translation Studies	1.Translator E	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed freelance translator since Jul 2014 (8 yrs 4 mos) <b>Education:</b> Ph.D. student of Translation Studies

2.Translator B	<b>Experience:</b> Full-time agency translator for 15 years - Full-time employed translator at the Iranian Foreign Ministry - Translator at a translation office - Part-time translator at a number of translation agencies <b>Education:</b> Bachelor's degree, English Translation	2.Translator F	<b>Experience:</b> - Full-time legal translator since 2018 (certified translator) - Freelance translator since 2010 - Book translator <b>Education:</b> MA degree, English Translation
3.Translator C	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed translator since Jul 2012 (10 yrs 9 mos) <b>Education:</b> MA degree, Translation Studies	3.Translator G	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed freelance translator since 2017 <b>Education:</b> MA degree, Translation Studies
4.Translator D	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed translator since 2017 <b>Education:</b> MA degree, English Language Teaching	4.Translator H	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed freelance translator since 2016 <b>Education:</b> Ph.D. candidate in Translation Studies
		5.Translator I	<b>Experience:</b> - Freelance translator since 2002 (21 yrs 3 mos) - Book translator - Certified translator <b>Education:</b> Bachelor's degree, English Translation
		6. Translator J	<b>Experience:</b> Self-employed freelance translator since 2015 (7 yrs) <b>Education:</b> MA degree, Translation Studies

### Waddington's Model of Translation Quality Assessment

In the present study, the researchers needed to evaluate the translations to discover the possible connections between translation quality and the money received for those translations. In other words, the aim is to test the study's hypothesis, which speculates that the money translators receive for their work might affect the quality of their work in that it either acts as an incentive to produce a good quality translation or conversely demotivate the translators from doing their best. To this end, Waddington's (2001) holistic model of TQA model was adopted.

As Waddington and other theorists in TS, such as Farahzad (1991) assert, there are basically two models of TQA. These are the holistic model and the error analysis model. While in the former approach, we assess the quality holistically with the help of rubrics which define quality through terms like accuracy and fluency, in the latter approach, we count the number of errors which could be such



as accuracy errors, grammatical errors, spelling errors, fluency errors. Originated in Spain, Waddington's model consists of five levels and a marking system of 0 to 10 (Table 3).

It introduces two main criteria for the assessment of translation quality. These are accuracy and expression. Accuracy "is the degree of accuracy with which the translator transfers the content from the source to the target text; and expression refers to the quality of the translator's expression of this content in the target language" (Waddington, 2001). As is illustrated in Table 1, level 5, which means both complete transfer of content and a translation that reads like a piece originally written in the target language, receives the highest mark (i.e., 9~10), while level 1 receives the lowest mark (i.e., 1~2).

Table 3. Waddington's Model of Translation Quality Assessment

Levels	Accuracy of transfer of ST content	Quality of expression in TL	Degree of task completion	Mark
<b>Level 5</b>	Complete transfer of ST information; only minor revision needed to reach professional standard.	Almost all the translation reads like a piece originally written in ST. There may be minor lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors	Successful	9, 10
<b>Level 4</b>	Almost complete transfer; there maybe one or two insignificant inaccuracies that require a certain amount of revision to reach professional standard.	Large sections read like a piece originally written in ST. There are several lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors.	Almost completely successful	7, 8
<b>Level 3</b>	Transfer of the general idea(s) but with several lapses in accuracy; Needs considerable revision to reach professional standard.	Certain parts read like a piece originally written in ST but others read like a translation. There are considerable number of lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Adequate	5, 6
<b>Level 2</b>	Transfer undermined by serious inaccuracies; thorough revision required to reach professional standard.	Almost the entire text reads like a translation; there are continual lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Inadequate	3, 4
<b>Level 1</b>	Totally inadequate transfer of ST content; the translation is not	The candidate reveals a total lack of ability to express	Totally inadequate	1, 2

	worth revising.			
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As Stansfield et al. and Waddington (2001) confirmed, the criteria in the model, that is, accuracy and expression, are in line with what teachers of translation think translation competence is, which they define as “the ability to understand and transfer the content of the source text and the ability to express this content adequately in the target language.” Therefore, it was selected as a tool for operationalizing translation quality in the present research. The process of evaluation will be carried out by the researchers themselves. That is, every translation will be evaluated by two evaluators. Where the evaluators disagree in one point or less the median of the two scores will be assigned as the true score. Where the disagreement is larger than that the two evaluators will cooperatively evaluate the translation so that they reach a consensus.

### Framework of Analysis

Before describing the nature of the data, the frameworks for analyzing the data will be briefly explained. The present study draws on a theoretical framework and a model of TQA for the data analysis. The theoretical framework adopted is agency theory. It is an economic theory that addresses the relationships between the agent and their principal from a financial point of view (Kivistö, 2007). Its main objective is to recognize the faults within a commercial transaction between the agent and the principal who delegates authority to an agent. In other words, the agent acts on behalf of the principal (Eisenhardt, 1989). In its most basic sense, the principal is someone who heavily relies on an agent to execute specific financial decisions and transactions that can result in fluctuating outcomes.

Because the principal relies heavily on the agent to make the right decision, there may be an assortment of conflicts or disagreements. Agency theory dives into such relationships. The theory presupposes several causes for the conflicts that arise out of a principal-agent deal. One of the conflicts, as Abdallah (2010) has previously confirmed through an empirical study, could be a confidentiality breach regarding the personal and financial information of the principal; that is, the principal may not pay the agent the money that he/she deserves. Faced with such unjust behavior, the agent may lower their quality as retaliation in response. Retaliation, also called ‘tit for tat’, is a strategy the agent uses when the principal does not cooperate (Abdallah, 2010).

Adopting the same framework to the study of the translation market as Abdallah (2010) did, the principal could be a usual client, a translation company, or a client company in a production network. The agent in our present case is the translator who acts on behalf of either of the principals mentioned above. In the current research, agency theory is adopted for analyzing the results, that is, for the interpretation of the scores assigned to each translation, which are calculated by means of Waddington’s TQA model.

## Results

This section reports the translations’ quality assessment (QA) results of each translator and analyzes the QA results with respect to the fees and the translators’ level of satisfaction.

### Translator A

As illustrated in Table 2, translator A, who had nine years of experience in the market, produced high-quality translations. This translator sent three of his translations to the researchers. He received 9.5 for the three of his translations. 0.5 of the score which was deducted belonged to the minor punctuation errors he had in each translation. Overall, all his translations fall in level 5 (the highest level) of Waddington’s TQA framework. As to his level of satisfaction, he was utterly discontent with the fees he received for his works. When he was asked to send translations that he received good money for, his answer was:

(1) پول خوب برای هیچ سفارشی نگرفتم.

Money for good none did not get order

'I did not receive good money for either of the translations I did.'

More surprisingly, he mentioned that he has stopped working as a translator. Here is how he expressed himself in Persian.

(2) مدتیه از ترجمه دست کشیدم.

I drew hand translation from It has been a while

سر همین که پولی توش نیست.

Because that's why that is money in it there is not

دیگه نهایتاً موردی بهزور ترجمه کنم.

From now on I do translation unless forced from time to time

آخرین پروژه ترجمه من رو X قبول کرده بود.

The last project mine translation x accepted

خودش گفت نمی‌رسه انجام بده. من ناچارى قبول کردم.

He said I to do it does not have enough time I accepted reluctantly

وگرنه هیچ پروژه دیگه‌ای نمی‌گیرم.

Otherwise I don't accept other project no

'I have stopped translating for a while now. There is no money in translating. I no longer accept translation projects. The last project was outsourced to me by X (a friend of the translator). He said he didn't have time to do it. So, I reluctantly accepted it. Otherwise, I don't accept projects anymore.'

The fact that this translator was completely dissatisfied with the money he received for all his translations defies the study's hypothesis. The low fees he received did not affect the quality of his translations but resulted in leaving the translation market.

Table 4. Translator A

Translator A	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Physical education essay	English into Farsi	5,000	19.05 \$	Dissatisfied	9.5
T2	Accounting essay	English into Farsi	5,700	14.93 \$	Dissatisfied	9.5
T3	Accounting essay	English into Farsi	4,926	7.02 \$	Dissatisfied	9.5

'T' stands for "translation"

#### Translator B

This is the second most professional and experienced translator among the participants, with 15 years of sustained translation practice. Throughout these years he has been working in-house for a number of public, as well as, private organizations and agencies. He is currently employed as a full-time

translator at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. As illustrated below, he provided the researchers with eight translations (four of which he was financially satisfied and four with which he was dissatisfied). With the exception of one translation, he received acceptable scores for all his translations. Overall, the translations with the good fees were much better in quality in comparison to the translations with low fees. Some of the deficiencies with the two translations that received lower scores are 'literal translation of some words, phrases and sentences', 'typographical convention errors', 'missing some words', and 'erroneous transfer of the meaning'. Undoubtedly, all the above errors (it might be more accurate to call them mistakes) arose from the translator's carelessness because he has demonstrated his very good translation competence in the rest of his translations. However, the important question is that whether the lower quality of these two translations could be attributed to the low fees. As the translator in the interview indicated the answer is yes, but it seems that there are other reasons too. The translator himself acknowledged that he doesn't take the same effort and attention as he does for the translations with the good fees. However, as the results below show, the translator produced two perfect translations for which he received very low fees. Therefore, the hypothesis can only partially be verified. In addition to the low fees which seem to have discouraged the translator from producing a flawless translation, the type of translation and the client seems to have an effect in this case. The first four translations were all published in an electronic magazine entitled 'mahalaye nabinaian' (translated as the neighborhood of the blind) which publishes content for the Iranian blind society. On the other hand, the translations with the low fees (80~120 Tomans per word) were not published anywhere. Therefore, given the fact that the translator's name is published with the translation, it seems that he did his best for the published translations. Furthermore, in the interview the translator mentioned that in the former case the translations undergo a post-editing process which seems to be absent in the translations with the low fees. The results of this translator specifically point towards another factor which might affect the translation quality. This is the 'client' as well as the type of translation (i.e., whether the client wants the translation to be published somewhere or not).

Table 5. Translator B

Translator B	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	General article	English into Farsi	3,228	20 \$	Satisfied	9.75
T2	General Medicine (article)	English into Farsi	3,828	24 \$	Satisfied	10
T3	General article	English into Farsi	2,952	18.5 \$	Satisfied	10
T4	General article	English into Farsi	3,021	19 \$	Satisfied	9.75
T5	Political article	English into Farsi	11,779	30 \$	Unsatisfied	6.5
T6	Historical article	English into Farsi	8,944	22.5 \$	Unsatisfied	9.75
T7	Historical article	English into Farsi	5,840	14.5 \$	Unsatisfied	10
T8	Medical Geography article	English into Farsi	20,235	50.5 \$	Unsatisfied	8

### Translator C

Translator C, who had 11 years of experience in the translation market, also produced high-quality translations for both of his translations sent to the researchers. One of these was an essay of 4,000 words in linguistics, for which the translator was paid 9.52 \$. The other was an essay of 5,000 words in automotive engineering for which he received 11 \$. He sent two of his translations and was dissatisfied with the low wages he received for all his translations. Nonetheless, translator C received a high score for his low-paid translations as translators A and B did (Table 6). Although he still worked in the market, he hinted that he might leave his job in the company in the near future due to low wages.

Table 6. Translator C

Translator C	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Linguistics	English into Farsi	4,000	9.52 \$	Dissatisfied	9
T2	Automotive Engineering	English into Farsi	5,000	11 \$	Dissatisfied	9.5

### Translator D

This case differed from the other three participants in that he hardly accepts translations with low payment. Therefore, he provided the researchers with two translations only. As shown below, both of the translations were successful in terms of quality.

As illustrated in Table 7, he produced high-quality translations like the other participants.

Table 7. Translator D

Translator D	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Commerce	English into Farsi	1,000	2.3 \$	Satisfied	10
T2	Commerce	English into Farsi	1,100	2.4 \$	Dissatisfied	10

### Translator E

This translator is a self-employed freelance translator and subtitler with 8 years of continuous experience. She is a Ph.D. student in Translation Studies. This translator mentioned that for a long time she has been working for an institution that continuously sends her works to translate. The translator was neutral in her opinion with regard to the fees she received from this institution and described the fees as relatively acceptable. This shows that the translator expects higher fees. As illustrated below, she sent five of her recent translations to the researchers, for which she received full marks in terms of quality. As in the previous case, the lower fees did not discourage the translator from producing high quality translations.

Table 8. Translator E

Translator E	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Medicine	English into Farsi	2,013	4.6 \$	Relatively acceptable	10



T2	General library text	English into Farsi	172	0.4 \$	Relatively acceptable	10
T3	Pragmatic	English into Farsi	4,852	11.16 \$	Relatively acceptable	10
T4	Law	English into Farsi	432	1 \$	Unacceptable	10
T5	Pragmatic	English into Farsi	305	0.7 \$	Unacceptable	10

### Translator F

This is a certified translator with 12 years of experience as a freelancer and 6 years as an in-house legal translator. Therefore, she is a professional translator as translation is her main source of income. As shown in the table below, she provided the researchers with four of her recent works for which she received full marks. Two of these translations were done for low fees. However, this did not discourage the translator from producing perfect translations. Hence, in the case of this translator, the low fees did not have any negative effect on the translation quality.

Table 9. Translator F

Translator F	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Law	Farsi into English	4,155	12.46 \$	Satisfied	10
T2	Purchase contract	Farsi into English	1,512	4.52 \$	Satisfied	10
T3	Work contract	Farsi into English	1,206	1.44 \$	Dissatisfied	10
T4	Work contract extension	Farsi into English	1,150	1.44 \$	Dissatisfied	10

### Translator G

This translator works for a number of translation agencies including Tarjomic. She mentioned that she is totally discontent with the fees she receives from the agencies for whom she works. This is how she responded when she was asked to provide the researchers with works for which she received good fees and works for which she received low fees:

(۱) درمورد دو ترجمه‌ای که دستمزد خوبی نگرفتم  
I didn't receive good payment translations for which  
میتونم براتون بفرستم اما تاحالا ترجمه‌ای نبوده که از  
from that there was not a translation yet but for you send I can

دستمزد اون راضی بوده باشم. چون کارارو از سایت‌هایی  
websites from the orders because I have been satisfied Payment its  
مثل ترجمیک می‌گیرم. دستمзда معمولا خیلی پایین.

low very usually the fees I get Tarjomic Such as  
'I can send you those two translations for which I received low fees. But there has been no translation yet for which I received good fees. The fees are usually very low because I get my works from websites like Tarjomic'.

Nonetheless, the translator produced high quality translations for these works, which defies the research hypothesis.

Table 10. Translator G

Translator G	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Pragmatic	English into Farsi	434	0.4 \$	Dissatisfied	10
T2	Specialized (informative)	English into Farsi	1,939	1.3 \$	Dissatisfied	5

#### Translator H

Translator H, who also had seven years of professional practice, produced high-quality translations. Out of four translations that belonged to various subject fields, including nursing, architecture, and Art, the translator received a full score for three translations (i.e., 10/10) and 9 for one, which was an abstract of 300 words. What is surprising about this translator is that the translation for which she received 9 out of ten is the only translation with whose fee the translator was satisfied. Except this translation (the abstract), the translator was completely dissatisfied with the money she was paid for her job. Like translator A, this translator claimed that she will no longer accept translations and intends to find another job. Nonetheless, the low fees did not discourage the translator from producing high-quality translations (Table 11).

Table 11. Translator H

Translator H	Subject field	Direction	Word count	Fee	Satisfaction with the fee	Score
T1	Architecture abstract	English into Farsi	300	1.67 \$	Satisfied	9
T2	Nursing essay	English into Farsi	4,000	4.76 \$	Dissatisfied	10
T3	Art	English into Farsi	764	4.76 \$	Dissatisfied	10
T4	Art	English into Farsi	974	4.76 \$	Dissatisfied	10

#### Translator I

Translator I is the most experienced translator among all the participants. She has 21 years of experience as a predominantly self-employed freelance translator. She had also worked for some translation agencies including Tarjomic, Transnet, and in an official translation bureau. Furthermore, she had translated some books from English into Persian. As is illustrated in Table 12, she received complete marks for all her translations which are technical texts (including three legal texts and a

commercial contract). The translator produced highly successful translations both when she was satisfied with the fees and when she was dissatisfied.

Table 12. Translator I

Translator I	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	Law	Farsi into English	1,756		Dissatisfied	10
T2	Law	Farsi into English	791		Dissatisfied	10
T3	Commerce	English into Farsi	3,677		Satisfied	10
T4	Law (BA degree transcript of records)	Farsi into English	1,654		Satisfied	10

#### Translator J

This freelance translator (with seven years of sustained translation practice) sent three of her translations, two of which with acceptable fees and one unacceptable. As illustrated below, the translator produced successful translations in all the three occasions. As to the last translation for which she received nine out of ten, an error analysis of the translation revealed that the two errors were actually mistakes (due to the translator carelessness). In on occasion, the translator had mistranslated “60 Iraqi male EFL learners” into «معلم مرد عراقی زبان انگلیسی ۶۰»، where the translator mistook ‘learners’ for ‘teachers’ which exactly appeared in the preceding phrase that reads “Nineteen male EFL teachers”. The other error was missing the word “semi-structured” in the phrase “semi-structured interview” in the following sentence: “At the end of the study, two semi-structured interviews were done with teachers ...”. This was translated as follows:

(1) در پایان، دو مصاحبه با معلمان و زبان آموزان انجام شد.

were held language learners and teachers with interviews two finally

‘Finally, two interviews were held with teachers and language learners.’

All in all, the translations quality remained consistent, which defies the possible negative impact of low fees on the translation quality.

Table 13. Translator J

Translator J	Subject Field	Direction	Word Count	Fee	Satisfaction with the Fee	Score
T1	MA dissertation abstract (Arabic language and literature)	English into Farsi	291	1.33 \$	Satisfied	10
T2	Finance (Money laundering)	English into Farsi	14,215	17.5 \$	Dissatisfied	9.75
T3	Academic abstract (Linguistics)	English into Farsi	283	0.75 \$	Satisfied	9

## Discussion

It has to be acknowledged that some of the findings of the present study conflict with Abdallah's (2010) study conducted in Finland. Although the Finnish translators in that study abstained from producing good quality translations due to low payment, the translators of the present study produced high-quality translations both when they were lowly paid (which was mostly the case) and when they received good money. In other words, the financial factor did not hinder the participants from producing good quality translations or retaliating in kind. However, both studies suggest that some moral factors might affect the translators' behavior and, subsequently, their product. As the participants indicated in the interview, the translators did not consider it appropriate to retaliate in kind for the low wages that they were paid. As some of them indicated, producing low quality translation could stigmatize their reputation. Therefore, they abstained from producing low quality translations and preferred to show their qualifications instead. However, the unjust rates were not without ramifications. Dissatisfied with the financial conditions, the translators changed multiple jobs. The results obtained in this study also verify previous studies that showed that the translation market in Iran is a desperate one (see Kafi et al., 2018; Mirsafian et al., 2019). In fact, all the translators in our study experienced working at different places, including in-house translators at sale companies, insurance companies, translation bureaus, online translation agencies, etc. If this fact points to anything it is the desperate market of translation in Iran and the financial insecurity that the Iranian translators struggle with at their work. As was pointed out previously, translation rates in the unofficial translation market of Iran are very lower than those of the international market. However, unofficial translation in Iran as revealed by the quality assessment enjoys very acceptable quality, with a median of 9.47 out of 10 so as to follow Waddington's model of TQA.

## Conclusion

Based on the current research findings, the fact that our participant translators are paid low wages did not hinder them from producing good quality translations. The analysis showed that under different financial conditions, these translators produced high-quality translations. The results defy the negative impact of payment on the quality of translations. Drawing on agency theory and the translators' comments expressed in the interview, it was revealed that other factors than the financial aspects condition translators' mindset concerning the quality of their translations, such as ethical considerations and the translator's reputation. The participants felt committed to their job and clients to produce the best results even in poor financial conditions. Furthermore, as some translators pointed out, producing low quality translation could threaten their reputation.

Nonetheless, although the low payment and the unjust market of the translation did not affect translation quality, as the semi-structured interview with the participants showed, it psychologically frustrated the translators and led most of them to leave their jobs.

## Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

As stated above, part of the results of the present study are in conflict with other studies conducted in Europe (e.g. Abdallah 2010). It seems that the results obtained in Iran might not be true about translators in other parts of the world. Accordingly, the researchers suggest that more studies be conducted in Iran and other parts of the world so that we have a clear picture of the role of translators' workplace and specifically the financial conditions in shaping the translation product. Furthermore, as the present study was conducted with few participants, the researchers propose that studies with larger groups of participants be conducted so that we have a clear picture of the object of the study.

Additionally, future studies can investigate the role of Habitus on translation quality. This sociological concept is believed to impact individual's (including translators) behavior. Therefore, the researchers believe that investigating its impact on the translation product might yield interesting results. Furthermore, the influence of the translators' Habitus can be compared to the influence of other contextual factors (e.g., translation fees and clients) so as to find out which of the two had stronger influence on translation quality.

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