Policies and Perceptions Around Censorship in Literary Translation in Iran

Saeed Ranjbar*

Assistant Professor, Qaemshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr, Iran

Abstract

The present study was conducted to explore the current policies on screening and censorship in Iran with a special focus on literary works. In addition, the publicized perceptions regarding screening and censorship were also in focus. The material of the study included the officially published documents by the Cabinet and Parliament in addition to the councils responsible for cultural policy making. Further material for the study of the public perceptions encompassed the published interviews, editorials, and reports on official websites or media. The method of the study was mainly content analysis. Through the process of directed coding, the researcher identified the relevant codes in sentences which were the units of analysis. Then they were grouped under relevant themes. The results of the study showed that the major criteria for censorship were religious-related, moral, and political ones. Moreover, the major types of censorship were pre-publication, self-censorship, and post-publication. Among these types and criteria, the political considerations and pre-publication were the most dominant ones. The findings were discussed from a socio-cultural perspective and the implications were elaborated on with regard to translation training requirements.

Keywords: Censorship; Literary works; Perceptions; Policies

1. Introduction

The history of systematic censorship can be traced back to the creation of the printing press. Initially, an informal understanding was established between the government and the media to refrain from publishing

*Corresponding Author's E-mail address: saeed.ranjbar43@gmail.com; saeed.ranjbar43@iau.ic.ir

sensitive content. Over the years, censorship in the Western world has seen various changes. Although it is often suggested that censorship is minimal today and that freedom of expression prevails in Western nations, both formal and informal instances of censorship persist. In these societies, the term "censorship" carries a certain stigma, and there are no clear regulations addressing specific methods or cases of censorship (Mollanazar, 2011).

While censorship as a topic has been extensively studied, censorship in translation has not received equivalent attention. This study primarily focuses on the latter but begins by examining the general concept of censorship. According to Jansen and Martin (2003), censorship refers to socially constructed limitations that obstruct the sharing of ideas, information, images, and messages across a society's communication channels, enforced by various authorities, including political, economic, and religious systems. Censorship can manifest as both overt and covert restrictions. In the context of translation, Billiani (2014) notes that "invisibility" characterizes both censorship and translation; however, their goals differ—translators strive for invisibility to accurately convey messages from the source culture to the target audience.

Although some have proposed that translators should be more visible in their work, the prevailing view suggests that they should remain invisible to preserve the integrity of the original message. In contrast, censors take advantage of this invisibility to obstruct certain messages and to convince audiences that censorship has not occurred, thus presenting the material as intended by the original creators (Bates, 2004). Since censorship typically functions quietly, those who enact it are often not easily identifiable. They frequently use euphemisms such as licensing authorities or classification bodies rather than explicitly defining themselves as censors (Freshwater, 2004). The hidden nature of censorship is further perpetuated by official narratives designed to obscure its presence from the public.

These factors have led the researcher to delve into the issue of censorship in Iran, particularly due to the scarcity of local research on the topic. By employing a critical content analysis approach, the study seeks to examine the criteria established by Iranian governmental bodies for evaluating literary texts and to identify the most common forms of censorship found in literary translation.

Following this line of research on censorship, the current study delimited its scope to the investigation of policies that are currently enforced in Iran when issuing permission for a publication, and exploring the perceptions of the stakeholders, as formally stated in public and

documented in archives. Based on the analysis of the qualitative data drawn from collected documents, the researcher attempted to draw the major criteria for screening literary texts, and major types of censorship as perceived by the stakeholders of publishing within the field of literary translation.

RQ1: What are the major criteria in Iran that have been the basis of text screening by the governments with regard to literary texts?

RQ2: What are the major types of censorship in literary text translation?

2. Literature Review

2.1. A Socio-cultural Perspective to Censorship

Societal norms are transformed into social standards by key individuals such as commissioners, initiators, and publishers, influencing our views on various life aspects. These standards differ in both intensity and complexity, often reflecting the specific cultural context of their time (Hassani, 2016). Cultural differences—such as taboos, sensitive religious and moral issues, political matters, and varying life perspectives—create significant challenges in translation and other social sciences, prompting inquiries into how to navigate these complexities with minimal negative effects (Mollanazar, 2011).

The censorship of translated works usually stems from three main motivations: the preservation of public morality, religious beliefs, and political interests (Çiçek, 2022). Historically, numerous artistic expressions have been censored due to concerns that they may negatively influence public morals, leading authorities to worry about the potential for individuals to imitate behaviors portrayed in literature (Allan & Burridge, 2006). While economic factors might contribute to self-censorship to some degree, the primary focus remains on adherence to existing moral standards; otherwise, works could face bans after publication (Baker & Saldanha, 2009).

Religious censorship aims to protect faiths from ideologies viewed as incompatible with their fundamental beliefs. Appignanesi (2010) notes that religions often see dissenting opinions as threats to their doctrinal purity. However, the need to protect religious perspectives is not the only reason for such censorship; it also involves safeguarding the feelings of adherents who might find certain content objectionable, even if they do not outright reject exposure to differing ideas, asserting their right to respect for their sensitivities (Lathey, 2019).

Political censorship is another significant catalyst for censorship, with many governments historically imposing restrictions to defend their

authority against potentially subversive ideas (Hosnieh, 2021). Contradictory perspectives can jeopardize established political systems, especially when foreign literature introduces concepts from different cultures or governance models that could incite demands for political reform domestically (Ebrahimi et al., 2023).

Governments often hide their politically motivated censorship from the populace. Müller (2004) points out that, despite official narratives provided by authorities, the true aim of controlling information dissemination is to maintain dominance over the public sphere, primarily driven by ideological motivations rather than genuine concern for public welfare. Unlike censorship aimed at upholding public morals or protecting religious beliefs, political censorship mainly serves to sustain the power dynamics of the government (Nowruzy & Hashemi, 2023).

Such political censorship not only seeks to suppress harmful ideas but also controls the reading materials accessible to the public, favoring books that align with governmental ideologies while promoting a favorable image of those in power. In communist regimes, literature was utilized to mold citizens into adopting socialist values and ideals, fostering a collective mindset aimed at progress (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2011). As a result, even works that did not explicitly oppose the regime could be rejected during selection if they did not actively support the political agenda.

Interestingly, some censors have regarded their responsibilities in a unique light, viewing censorship not as a form of oppression but as a way to promote cultural exchange. They believed that by removing objectionable material, they were actually aiding the sharing of translated works rather than hindering it (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2011). This perspective sheds light on the intricate nature of censorship, indicating that even controversial alterations often allowed for the publication of translations that might have otherwise remained unpublished.

2.2. Categorization of Censorship

Censorship can take various forms, and scholars classify it differently. The World Book Encyclopedia (2007) identifies key categories such as moral, military, political, and religious censorship, while Khosravi (1999) breaks it down into socio-political, ethical, and religious types. Additionally, Rajabzadeh (1996) introduced economic censorship and highlighted cultural censorship related to self-regulation, along with academic censorship that pertains to limits on scientific publishing.

In translation, censorship can occur at multiple phases of the book-publishing process and can be implemented by a range of players. Billiani

(2014) emphasized the complex and layered nature of censorship, especially regarding translated texts. Changes to the original work during translation can happen through various methods, including both pre-publication and post-publication censorship, with distinctions made between public and self-censorship (Müller, 2004).

When examining censorship in translation, it's important to differentiate between actions taken before and after publication (Kuhiwczak, 2011). Pre-publication censorship, referred to as pre-emptive censorship by Escolar (2011), begins with the selection of books for translation. Authorities assess the content to decide if it's fit for public release; if significant concerns arise, the translation might be rejected entirely. Alternatively, minor edits may be necessary during translation to address potential issues that could arise later (Müller, 2004). Post-publication censorship can involve works that were released prior to the establishment of formal censorship laws or those that, despite being published after such regulations, went unnoticed (Müller, 2004). Self-censorship, distinct from public censorship enforced by authorities, emerges as a separate phenomenon. In the context of translation, it arises from the need to manage political pressures and avoid the consequences associated with public censorship (Sariz, 2017). Translators and publishing staff may choose to self-censor to prevent external criticism, balancing their creative intentions with societal expectations (Baker & Saldanha, 2009). This voluntary modification of texts can be initiated by the translators or required by editors involved in the final publication, demonstrating that censorship mechanisms can function within society even without official censors (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Holquist, 1994).

2.3. Censorship in Iran

2.3.1. Censorship before the Islamic Revolution

The 20th article of the amendment to Iran's first constitutional law ratified in 1907, states that "all publications are free, except for misleading materials and those harmful to Islam, which are prohibited from circulation." The 24th article stipulates that "the press and publications can express opinions unless they threaten Islamic principles or public rights, with specifics determined by law." Under the press regulations during the Pahlavi dynasty, censorship would occur if any publication violated certain sacred principles, including (1) the political foundation for national unity, (2) the Islamic faith, (3) the Pahlavi dynasty, and (4) public decency.

In practice, additional restrictions included prohibiting criticism of allied nations, particularly during World War II, as well as against the US

and Israel post-1953. Other censored topics included Marxist or revolutionary writings, discussions on social movements, publications in local languages other than Persian, critiques of corruption among officials, usage of names exclusive to the royal family, and accounts of torture within the regime's prisons.

Censorship intensified at times during the Pahlavi era. Mir-abedini (1998) notes that between 1933 and 1941, during Reza Khan's regime, censorship peaked with the establishment of the Organization for Nurturing Intellects, which was tasked with monitoring and regulating thoughts. Following the 1953 coup, many writers either fled, faced imprisonment, or were exiled. According to Mir-abedini (1998), while censorship hindered original literary production, it also spurred a rise in translation.

In 1966, during Muhammad Reza Shah's reign, publishers were mandated to submit their works to the Office of Book Writing in the Ministry of Culture and Art for prior approval. The Authors' Association was created in 1967 to champion authors' rights to free expression. The years from 1971 to 1976 are characterized by increased censorship practices.

Translated works generally encountered less rigorous scrutiny, except for novels from communist nations like the Soviet Union, which were perceived as promoting communist ideologies. This trend of heightened oversight began after the 1953 American-backed coup, leading to the suppression of materials considered either communist or overly Islamic during the Pahlavi period (Mir-abedini, 1998).

Khosravi (1999) examined records of over 20,000 books submitted to the Office of Book Writing from 1941 to 1978, which was responsible for evaluating publications. During this timeframe, about 26% of literary works received conditional approval pending minor changes, representing the highest rate of such censorship compared to other genres, while 11% were rejected outright without official notice. Ethical censorship predominantly targeted literature and arts, with an average processing time of 47 days per book at the office.

2.3.2. Censorship after the Revolution

After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Islamic Revolution Council implemented the Fourth Press Law on August 9, 1979. This legislation aimed to address the disordered media landscape that had developed following the revolution, as there were no existing constitutional regulations at that time (Karoubi, 2023). The law sought to oversee the printing and distribution of various publications that had emerged without

established guidelines. Notably, it excluded any references to the Pahlavi dynasty, marking a significant shift.

At first, publishers were obligated to submit their works to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for review to ensure they complied with the new law. As the situation improved, the authorities began to streamline the book review process to reduce delays by implementing a more lenient screening system. After the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the officials responsible for book publishing within the Ministry decided to eliminate pre-publication censorship, considering it inconsistent with international practices. Publishers were permitted to print and distribute their works without prior approval, as long as they followed the press law. Any violations could result in legal consequences if complaints were filed against them (Mollanazar, 2011).

Overall, the system has proven to be effective, with few reports of publishers breaching laws or societal standards. Many publishers practice self-regulation and self-censorship to avoid potential legal challenges, financial setbacks, or court cases. Individuals evaluate new content based on the social norms outlined in the Press Law, while some "revolutionary" individuals, often from religiously conservative backgrounds, actively report what they consider morally objectionable publications (Karoubi, 2023). These vigilant individuals appear to be more proactive in identifying breaches of the press law than the authorities themselves.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance issues publishing permits according to the "Objectives and Criteria of Publishing Books," which were established by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 1997. This framework requires the government to prohibit the publication of works that do not meet specific standards (Mollanazar, 2011).

3. Method

From a methodological perspective, this research adopted a critical content analysis which serves as a prominent methodological approach within the study of communication and media which were delimited to the corpus on censorship of fiction translation, aiming to dissect the power structures and ideologies embedded within it.

Critical content analysis is emblematic of an interpretive framework that strives to unmask the hidden agendas and power dynamics existing within media representations. As Fairclough (2015) posits, critical analysis plays a pivotal role in deconstructing language and communication to discern how they shape societal perceptions and norms.

Critical content analysis finds its application in a myriad of contexts including but not limited to journalism studies for uncovering biases in news reporting (Hall, 2021); cultural studies for understanding representation within popular culture; and feminist studies for elucidating gender stereotypes perpetuated through mass media (Dines & Humez, 2018). Additionally, this methodological approach has been instrumental in examining political discourses within electoral campaigns and probing corporate communication strategies to reveal underlying ideological stances.

Critical content analysis served as an indispensable tool for excavating the intricate power dynamics inherent within the corpora of the study. By critically examining textual and materials through an interdisciplinary lens, the researcher is better poised to divulge how representations of the perceptions and policies of censorship were reflected in the published material.

3.1. Corpus of the study

In order to answer the research questions, two sets of contents were developed. The first set of documents is the ones released officially for text screening by the Cabinet in the past years and the laws and regulations passed by the legislator faculties in Iran in order to screen and censor (literary) texts to be published in Iran. The documents are available from the official websites of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official website of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. These documents were further analyzed using critical content analysis.

The second set of data or corpus was used to answer the second research question and was gathered from released sources, either online or print, containing the publicized comments, criticisms, reviews of governmental policies, and interviews regarding the current practices, laws, and regulations of literary text screening in Iran. These contents were analyzed using the critical content analysis method.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The process of data collection began with consulting the available pool of data on the websites and databases of the Parliament and other documents officially issued by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Having collected the documents and official instructions the researcher then got into analyses of the documents. In addition, the documents gathered from official sources and authorities were analyzed using critical content analysis in order to extract the major criteria which were dominant in screening the works that have been translated so far.

In order to answer the second research question of the study, the researcher collects the accessible publicized commentaries, articles, reviews, editorials, criticisms, interviews, and news reports published either in print or online in the past 10 years. It is worth mentioning that the data and texts were collected from authorized sources formally published to be read or viewed in Iran. That is informal interviews, commentaries, and criticisms published on social media or any other informal sources were ignored and excluded. Moreover, those items published from sources abroad were excluded due to the fact that they may include politically manipulative information or propaganda.

To analyze the data, the directional content analysis method was adopted with regard to the purpose of the study since it focuses on identifying and interpreting the underlying themes, patterns, and sentiments expressed in textual data. The study involved the systematic collection of two primary types of documents: legal documents and public documents, as described in the previous section. The former was sourced from government databases, legal repositories, and official publications. The selection criteria were based on the relevance to censorship practices and the time frame, i.e., post-Islamic-revolution era, to ensure a comprehensive view of the evolving legal landscape. The latter included newspaper articles, editorials, opinion pieces, and online commentaries. A purposive sampling strategy, accordingly, was employed to identify articles that explicitly addressed censorship, ensuring a diverse representation of viewpoints.

The analysis process consisted of several key stages. A preliminary coding framework was established based on a review of existing literature on censorship and preliminary readings of the collected documents. Then, the researcher conducted the initial coding of the documents, applying the coding framework to identify relevant passages and themes. This process involved highlighting key phrases and sentences that reflected the policies and perceptions of censorship. Following the initial coding, the researchers engaged in the second round of analysis of the legal and public documents which was conducted a month after the initial coding stage. Through comparative analysis, he examined how the themes identified in the initial coding stage aligned or contrasted with those found in the second round of coding. Special attention was paid to the language used, the framing of censorship issues, and the expressed justifications or criticisms related to censorship practices. Next, the researcher convened to discuss his findings and refine the themes based on the analysis. This iterative process allowed for the identification of sub-themes and the

emergence of new insights regarding the relationship between legal policies and public perceptions.

The study adhered to ethical standards concerning the use of textual data. All legal and public documents analyzed were publicly available, and no confidential or sensitive information was included. The researchers ensured that the analysis was conducted with respect for the original authors' intent and context, providing appropriate citations and acknowledgments where necessary.

4. Results

The first research question of the study was:

RQ1: What are the major criteria in Iran that have been the basis of text screening by the governments with regard to literary texts?

In order to answer this research question, the researcher analyzed the official documents which were the Publication Regulations and Laws issued in 1988, in 2008, and finally in 2010.

Based on the analysis conducted, it was argued that the major criteria were public morality, religious-related standards, and political motivation. Although these themes are related in one way or the other ways, their roots and origins in these documents might be different.

- Religious-related standards

- اعتلای فرهنگ دینی و ملی در جامعه از طریق توسعه دانش و نهادینه کردن ارزشهای اسلامی، ایرانی و انقلابی با تأمین آزادی نشر کتاب، حفظ حرمت و آزادی قلم، صیانت از جایگاه والای علم، اندیشه و ایمان دینی و همچنین ایجاد زمینه مناسب برای حضور مؤثر در عرصه جامعه جهانی. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Elevating the religious and national culture in the society through the development of knowledge and institutionalizing Islamic, Iranian, and revolutionary values by ensuring the freedom to publish books, preserving the sanctity and freedom of the pen, protecting the high status of science, thought, and religious faith, as well as creating a suitable environment for effective presence in the world community. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

As recurrently stated in this excerpt from the Regulations issued in 1988, it can be argued that one of the key criteria for the publication of novels in particular, and books, in general, is religious-related standards. To be more specific, this religious-relatedness criterion is restricted to

Islamic beliefs, rather than other religions in Iran such as Zoroastrian and Christian standards. This is especially evident in the following excerpts:

- تبلیغ و ترویج الحاد و اباحه‌گری، انکار یا تحریف مبانی و احکام اسلام و مخدوش کردن چهره شخصیت‌هایی که از نظر دین اسلام محترم شمرده می‌شوند و تحریف وقایع تاریخی دینی که مآلاً به انکار مبانی دین منجر شود. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Propaganda and promotion of atheism and blasphemy, denying or distorting the foundations and rules of Islam, distorting the faces of figures who are respected by the Islamic religion, and distorting religious historical events that may lead to the denial of the foundations of the religion. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

It is also shown in the following excerpt:

- توهین به مقدسات دین مبین اسلام و تبلیغ علیه تعالیم اصول و مبانی آن (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Insulting the holy things of Islam and preaching against the teachings of its principles and foundations. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

- • Public morality

The second criterion found in the documents was related to public morality. Although this criterion was also mostly interpreted with reference to Islamic beliefs and standards, traditional codes were also in focus, as seen in the following examples:

- بیان جزئیات مراودات جنسی، گناهان، کلمات رکیک و مستهجن، به نحوی که موجب اشاعه فحشا شود. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Expressing the details of sexual relations, sins, obscene and obscene words, in a way that causes the spread of prostitution. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

Interpreting these criteria is also possible without referring to the religious texts and beliefs since the society and different communities in Iran, have their own interpretations of obscene words and actions. This is also seen in the following excerpt:

- انتشار تصاویر به نحوی که موجب اشاعه فحشا شود؛ نظیر رقص، مشروبخواری و مجالس فسق و فجور. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Publishing images in a way that causes the spread of obscene; such as dancing, drinking, and debauchery. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

Although this category is clarified in the regulations and laws, other instances of debauchery can be added based on local cultures and traditions.

- Political-related standards

The third and most extensive part of the documents on laws and regulations of censorship and screening is related to political issues. Considering the political issues in post-revolutionary documents, offending the nature of the governing power and figures is especially in focus, as shown in the following excerpt:

- توهین، تخریب یا افترا به امام خمینی (ره) و رهبری، رئیسجمهور، مراجع تقلید و تمام افرادی که حفظ حرمت آنها شرعاً و یا قانوناً لازم است. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

Insulting, destroying, or slandering Imam Khomeini (RA) and his leadership, the President, Taqlid authorities, and all the people whose sanctity is required to be respected by Sharia or law. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

A further political issue which was of concern in the official documents was the issue of cultural hegemony and Westernization. The document is clearly against the content which spreads the westernized beliefs or other perspectives relevant to cultural hegemony.

- ترویج و تبلیغ روحیه خودباختگی در برابر فرهنگ و تمدن بیگانه و القای حس عقبماندگی. (مصوبات شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی، ۱۳۸۹)
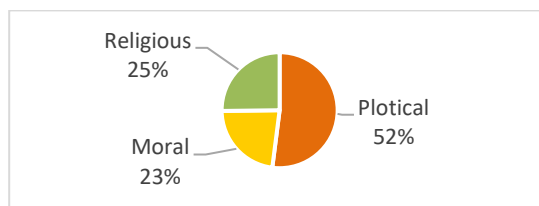
Transliteration

Promoting and propagating the spirit of self-defeat against foreign culture and civilization and inducing a sense of backwardness. (Resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2010)

In order to have a better representation of the distributions of the codes related to the reasons behind censorship and the criteria for censoring

literary texts, the frequencies of the codes are shown in the following figure.

Figure 1. *Distribution of the censorship criteria*

The second research question of the study was:

RQ2: What are the major types of censorship in literary text translation?

The results of the analysis done on the qualitative data from the official websites, interviews, and online articles published by translators, the researcher came up with three categories of censorship in literary texts:

- 1- pre-publication censorship
- 2- self-censorship
- 3- post-publication censorship

With regard to the first category, pre-publication censorship, the documents officially published by the government promotes the legal aspect of prepublication screening which is equal to censorship in pre-publication phase. It is shown in the following excerpt:

- متناسب با هر رشته تخصصی و کاری، کارگروهی متشکل از افراد صاحبنظر و به انتخاب شورای فرهنگ عمومی و زیرنظر هیأت تشکیل می‌شود. علاوه بر کارگروههای تخصصی فوق، کارگروههای استانی نیز به معرفی هیأت و انتخاب شورای فرهنگ عمومی، تشکیل می‌شود. ("نظارت بر چاپ"، ۱۳۸۹)

Transliteration

According to each specialized field and work, a working group is formed consisting of experts selected by the General Culture Council and under the supervision of the board. In addition to the above-specialized working groups, provincial working groups are also formed by the nomination and selection of the General Culture Council. ("Monitoring of Publishing", 2010)

Based on the abovementioned excerpt, the existence of pre-publication screening is legally seen as a normal process for publishing any type of material, including novels and literary works.

Additionally, some literary translators such as Mohammad Hassan Shahsavari also commented on pre-publication screening and stated that it is a type of censorship which may even financially affect the translators in Iran.

- در درجه اول ممیزی و در درجه بعد اقتصاد نشر ممکن است باعث شود این آرزو یا پیش‌بینی من محقق نشود. (شهسواری، ۱۳۹۸)

Transliteration

First of all, the audit and secondly the economy of publishing may make this wish or my prediction not come true. (Shahsavari, 2019)

Moreover, pre-publication translation is seen negatively among translators in Iran due to the fact that it is a time-consuming process and subjective, as described in the following excerpt:

- اما ماجرا گاه از چند ماه فراتر می‌رود و به چند سال و حتی یک دهه کشیده می‌شود. ولی این هم همه ماجرا نیست. معمولا کمتر کتابی است که نیازی به اصلاحات نداشته باشد اما این هم همه ماجرا نیست. کم نشنیده‌ایم که نویسنده یا مترجمی برای دریافت مجوز با اصلاحیه‌هایی عجیب و غریب و دور از ذهن رو به رو شود و همه اینها موجب شده وضعیت پیچیده‌ای به نام گذر از خوان ممیزی شکل بگیرد. (آل طیب، ۱۳۹۷)

Transliteration

But the story sometimes goes beyond a few months and extends to a few years or even a decade. But this is not the whole story. There are usually few books that do not need corrections, but this is not the whole story. We have not rarely heard that a writer or a translator has to face strange and far-fetched amendments to get a license, and all of this has led to the formation of a complex situation called passing the audit. (Al Tayyeb, 2018)

The second identified category was self-censorship among the translators. It is seen as a defensive strategy among translators in Iran in order to protect themselves against the long and torturing process of screening and revisions. There are a number of reasons for self-censorship, one of them is the linguistic and content complexity, as elaborated in the following excerpt:

- بهانه‌های مختلفی وجود دارد درباره زبان ما. می‌گویند در تبدیل زبان ما پیچیده است. پر از ایهام، تعارف و.. است و بسیاری از جنبه‌های آن قابل ترجمه نیست. من این را باور ندارم. گمان نمی‌کنم بیش از آثار افرادی همچون مارکز پیچیده باشیم. مارکز چیزی را در جهان عنوان کرد که در جهان ناشناخته بود. مساله واقعیت غیرواقع، جریانی بود که جهان با آن آشنا نبود. گمان می‌کنم موضوع در محتوای آثار ماست. (روشن، ۱۴۰۱)

Transliteration

There are many excuses for our language. They say that it is complicated to convert our language. It is full of hints, compliments, etc., and many aspects of it cannot be translated. I do not believe this. I don't think we are more complicated than the works of people like Marx. Marx stated something in the world that was unknown in the world. The problem of unreal reality was a current that the world was not familiar with. I think the issue is in the content of our works. (Roshan, 2022)

Among other reasons are the translator himself or herself. This is because the translator is willing to publish the work at any cost, despite missing part of his or her translation, as elaborated in the following excerpt:

- با مسایلی روبه رو هستیم که منجر به خودسانسوری نویسنده می‌شود. حقایق زندگی مثل عشق کمتر اجازه پررنگ شدن در آثار را دارند. برای همین اول نویسنده خودش را سانسور می‌کند، بعد ارشاد. علاوه بر این حتی اگر اثر مجوز چاپ بگیرد، ممکن است در آینده با سلیقه‌ای متفاوت در تجدید چاپ با مشکل مواجه شود. (روشن، ۱۴۰۱)

Transliteration

We are facing issues that lead to author self-censorship. The facts of life, like love, are less allowed to be highlighted in works. That's why first the author censors himself, then Irshad. In addition, even if the work gets permission to print, it may be difficult to reprint it in the future with a different taste. (Roshan, 2022)

The third identified type of censorship is post-publication censorship. The point is that according to the content analyzed in this study, the rules and regulations issued in governmental documents are open to interpretation. That is, to publish the same translation some years later, the second round of screening obligates the deletion or revision of some parts of the translated works which had been published already in the previous editions. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

- در حوزه ترجمه و کتاب‌های عمومی شامل شعر، داستان، رمان و ... و حوزه کتب اجتماعی، فرنگی‌ها طبق فرهنگ خود می‌نویسند. اگر این آثار را که وارد کشور می‌شود، بومی‌سازی نکنید و عین آن را منتشر کنید یا تقلید کنید از روی دست آنها، نتیجه‌اش تلاش برای نزدیک شدن فرهنگ بومی به فرهنگ غربی خواهد شد. این اتفاق در سال‌های گذشته تاحدودی رخ داده و در ۱۲ سال گذشته تشدید شده است. ("اگر ممیزی"، ۱۴۰۰)

Transliteration

In the field of translation and general books, including poems, stories, novels, etc., and in the field of social books, the Farengis write according to their culture. If you do not localize these works that enter the country and publish the same or imitate them, the result will be an attempt to bring

the native culture closer to the Western culture. This happened to some extent in the past years and has intensified in the past 12 years. ("If the Audit", 2020)

In order to present a better picture of the distribution of the types of censorship, the percentages of distribution of the codes related to this topic are presented in the following figure. It is seen that pre-publication type of censorship is the most dominant type of censorship followed by self-censorship and post-publication censorship.

Figure 2. *Types of censorship*
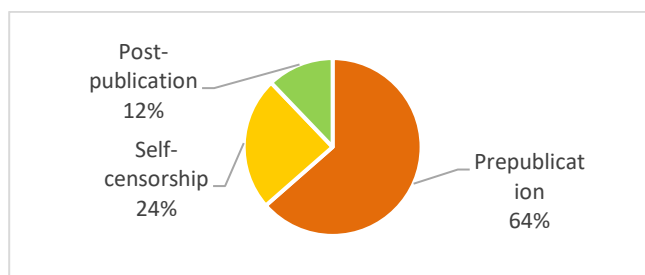
5. Discussion

The results of the study are totally in line with the sociocultural perspective on censorship. Generally, it can be stated that the results of this study are in line with the previous studies conducted with regard to the Iranian context (e.g., Khosravi, 1999). The results are in agreement with what Hassani (2016) and Mollanazar (2011) concluded in that not only are society's norms are translated into social standards to shape translators' perspectives but these social standards also vary in intensity and complexity in different time periods. Similar to Çiçek's (2022) study, it was found that upholding public morality, religious considerations, and political factors were the main sources of censorship in postrevolutionary Iran mainly because of the fact that authorities believe that individuals might mimic behavior depicted in literature (Allan & Burridge, 2006). According to Hosnieh (2021) and Ebrahimi et al., (2023) such a dominance of political censorship might be justified by the fact that the literary content might pose a threat to the established political structures, especially when it introduces concepts from divergent cultures with alternative governance systems and societal norms.

With regard to religious sources of censorship, based on the qualitative analysis, it may be concluded that the results contradict Appignanesi's

(2010) standpoint in that it does not serve to shield religions from conflicting ideologies. The results, however, are in agreement with Lathey's (2019) belief; that is, religious sources of censorship are mainly to protect the sentiments of the followers who may find certain content objectionable.

Generally, as depicted earlier in this paper, the results confirm what Billiani (2014) and Müller (2004) stated about the types of censorship of translated works in that both pre-publication and post-publication censorship, as well as self-censorship, exist in Iran, with pre-publication censorship being the most dominant. According to Kuhiwczak (2011) and Müller (2004), this pre-emptive type of censorship, as described by Escolar (2011), is mainly due to the fact that the translator's minor revisions during the translation process mitigate potential post-publication issues (Müller, 2004).

In contrast to public censorship enforced by authorities through official laws, self-censorship emerges as a distinct form of censorship. Considering the types of censorship, it can be argued that self-censorship, as Baker and Saldanha (2009) mentioned, occurs, to some extent, because of aligning with prevailing political standards identified in this study. It can be argued that this study indicated that, as stated by Baker and Saldanha (2009) and Sariz (2017) self-censorship arises from the need to circumvent potential repercussions linked to public censorship.

6. Conclusion

Considering the significance of screening and censorship in the history of Iran, especially, since Qajar, the researcher decided to study the dynamics of censorship as a socio-political phenomenon in Iran. A qualitative analysis was adopted in this study and the focus of the researcher was mainly on documents officially issued by the governmental committees, organizations, and councils.

Based on the results of the study, it was clarified that the process of censorship is predicted and supported in Iranian official documents and screening is legally supported and identified as an obligatory pre-publishing step in Iran. It was also determined that three major criteria are enumerated in the official documents in Iran, including safeguarding the morality in Iranian society, religious criteria, and political considerations, the role of political incentives in censorship is dominant in the official document. That is, it seems that political considerations are to some extent an umbrella criterion supporting religious consideration and safeguarding morality. Moreover, considering the types of censorship in Iran (as shown

in Figure 2), it can be argued that the pre-publication is the most dominant type. It can be justified according to the rules and regulations of publication in Iran. That is, prior to publishing any novel or work of literature, the translator needs to have his or her translated work screened by an official committee according to a set of pre-established criteria which has been in operation since 1988 and have been partially revised in 2009.

The results of this study have a number of implications for the field of translation studies. First and foremost, there is a need to raise the awareness of the trainees in the universities about the current regulations and rules and official instructions on screening. As a future translator, a trainee has to be aware of the imposed restrictions on the translated literary work. This may even affect the selection of a work for translation. That is, if it contains too many examples of the would-be-screened items, the translator may prefer not to translate the source text or publish it online.

Moreover, there is a need to make a number of amendments in the process of screening. As it was mentioned, pre-publication screening is a further source of self-censorship. That is, to escape from the long process of screening and revision, the translator may prefer to omit or modify parts of his or her translation to meet the screening criteria and priorities of the committees that are currently in charge of screening.

Considering the limitations of this study and the results reported in this report, further investigation is needed to focus on the self-censorship strategies of the current translators in Iran. Moreover, there is a need to investigate the awareness of the trainees with reference to the screening policies, rules, and regulations in Iran. Moreover, further investigation is needed to insert the relevant material in the curriculum of the current programs in terms of raising awareness about censorship and screening in Iran.

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