



University Centre of Abdelhafid Boussouf - Mila
2022-2023 Semestre 3

English 2nd Year (G: 4,5 & 6)

– Lesson 01 –

A Brief History of Translation Practice



Image

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Etudiants concernés

Institut	Département	Année	Spécialité
Literatures and Foreign Languages	Foreign Languages	2 nd Year	English Language

Lesson's Objectives : By the the end of this lesson, students will be able to answer questions like :

- When and where did translation appear ?
- What type of translation was done ? and
- Why translation was needed ?

1. Translation (the beginning) :

The Mesopotamian civilization or (the civilization of the Tigris and Euphrates river) is known to be the first civilization to exist around (3100 BC). It was at that time particularly around (2000 BC) that an old epic i.e. piece of literature known as «The Epic of Gilgamesh» was translated from Sumerian language to Asian languages. This is believed to be the first translation in the human history¹.

2. Translation in the Western Culture :

Although there are ample discussions around the periods of translation in the west, below are only some crucial stages :

- The translation of the Bible (الكتاب المقدس) from Hebrew into Greek Known as (the Septuagint=السبعينية) marked the beginning of the history of translation in the western culture. It is said that this translation was carried out by (72) translators between the 2nd& 3th century (BC). They translated the Bible for the Jewish community who were in Egypt².
- The second stage of translation history would be St. Jerome translation and revision of the Bible from Greek into Latin or what is known as (Vulgata=الفولغاتا) in the 4th century (CE) to be used as the standardized Latin version of the Bible in Rome³.
- The third stage would be Martin Luther translation of the Bible From Latin into East Central German (a regional dialect) between 1522 and 1534. This translation contributed in both preaching and making German a standard language. (*ibid*)
- The fourth stage also was in the Middle ages. It was the translation of the Bible by William Tyndale and the translation of theological subjects by Etiène Dolet. Whereas William Tyndale translated the Bible from Latin into English, Etiène Dolet translated Plato's religious dialogue from Latin into French. Actually, the translation of theological subjects among which the translation of the Bible was banned at that time because of the fear of distorting the translation of St. Jerome. It was for this reason that the English translator Tyndale was excuted for heresy in 1536 and the French translator Dolet was burned at the stake in 1546 for committing an error in his translation of some religious passages. (*ibid*)

2. A Brief History of Translation in the Arab Culture :

For the sake of being precise and concise, I mentioned only two periods in the Arab history in which translation was introduced and well-appreciated.

- The Umayyad Era (661-750 AC) : it was in this period that the activity of translation was launched by the Caliph Khalid Ben Yazid. He sponsored the translation of chemistry, astronomy and medical texts from Indian and Greek into Arabic. Then, came Ummar Ben Abd al-Aziz who appreciated translation and carried on appointing translators to translate scientific texts from Syriac into Arabic⁴.
- The Abbasid Era (750-1250 AC) : there were three Caliphs in this period. Al-Mansour, Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun. The golden age of translation was during the reign of al-Ma'mun who built the 'the House of Wisdom' to make it possible for translators to translate any new scientific product to enrich Arabic library. There were, thus, translations of Indian, Persian, Roman, and Greek works into Arabic in different fields including astrology, geometry, chemistry, medicine, mathematics, literature and philosophy⁵.

Books for Further readings :

Translation, History and Culture edited by André Lefevere

الترجمة: تاريخها، نظرياتها، تطبيقاتها تأليف علي المناع وفيصل المناع
فن الترجمة والتعريب (تعلم فن ترجمة النصوص ومدلولاتها الثقافية إلى العربية) تأليف عبّاد ديرانية

¹ See, *Fun Facts about translation*, published by www.itcglobaltranslations.com in 22/07/2015

² See, *Septuagint (biblical literature) : LXX*, by the editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica* www.britannica.com in 03/11/2022

³ See, *Introducing Translation Studies*, Jeremy Munday, 2nd ed., Routledge, London & New York 2008.

⁴ See, *Anthology of Arabic Discourse on Translation*, Tarek Shamma & Myriam Salama Carr, 1st ed., Routledge, London & New York 2022.

⁵ See, *Translation Theories Exemplified from Cicero to Pierre Bourdieu*, Ali Almannan, Sayab Books LTD, London, 2013.