

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSLATION PRACTICES: A CHRONOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

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**Annotation:** Translation practices have witnessed far-reaching changes through the centuries, evolving according to the different cultural, religious, political, and technological developments. From the revered translations of ancient cultures to contemporary digital localization and postcolonial approaches, the role of translation has developed from a vehicle of divine interpretation to a profession based on theoretical foundations, moral considerations, and technological innovations. This paper charts the historical evolution of translation, with a detailed analytical description of foundational phases, with emphasis on the translator's role, dominant strategies, and changing theoretical orientations.

**Keywords:** Translation history, evolution of translation, Cicero, Jerome, Luther, Schleiermacher, dynamic equivalence, Skopos theory, localization, cultural translation, sacred texts.

**Аннотация:** Практики перевода на протяжении веков претерпевали далеко идущие изменения, развиваясь в соответствии с различными культурными, религиозными, политическими и технологическими достижениями. От почитаемых переводов древних культур до современной цифровой локализации и постколониальных подходов роль перевода развивалась от средства божественного толкования до профессии, основанной на теоретических основах, моральных соображениях и технологических инновациях. В этой статье описывается историческая эволюция перевода с подробным аналитическим описанием основополагающих фаз с акцентом на роль переводчика, доминирующие стратегии и меняющиеся теоретические ориентации.

**Ключевые слова:** История перевода, эволюция перевода, Цицерон, Иероним, Лютер, Шлейермахер, динамическая эквивалентность, теория Скопоса, локализация, культурный перевод, священные тексты.

**Annotatsiya:** Tarjima amaliyoti asrlar davomida turli madaniy, diniy, siyosiy va texnologik o'zgarishlarga qarab rivojlanib borgan keng ko'lamli o'zgarishlarga guvoh bo'ldi. Qadimgi madaniyatlarning hurmatli tarjimalaridan tortib, zamonaviy raqamli mahalliyashtirish va postkolonial yondashuvlargacha, tarjimaning roli ilohiy talqin vositasidan nazariy asoslarga, axloqiy mulohazalar va texnologik yangiliklarga asoslangan kasbga aylandi. Ushbu maqola tarjimaning tarixiy evolyutsiyasini, asosiy bosqichlarning batafsil tahliliy tavsifini, tarjimon roliga, ustun strategiyalarga va o'zgaruvchan nazariy yo'nalishlarga urg'u beradi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Tarjima tarixi, tarjima evolyutsiyasi, Tsitseron, Jerom, Lyuter, Shleyermaxer, dinamik ekvivalentlik, Skopos nazariyasi, mahalliyashtirish, madaniy tarjima, muqaddas matnlar.

## Introduction

Translation, often seen as a purely linguistic activity, has long been a means for the transmission of intellectual, religious, and cultural understanding. Throughout different ages, translation has enabled the exchange of ideas, philosophies, legal codes, and literary creations between different languages. Each age has placed specific expectations and constraints upon translators, often reflecting larger sociopolitical environments.

Understanding the evolution of translation practices over history is vital to an appreciation of the field's complexities today. This work outlines this evolution in a chronological context, providing theoretical insights, practical examples, and a critical analysis of how translation responded to the needs of each historical era.

## Methodology

This study uses a chronological-descriptive approach based on historical translation studies. It examines important periods by making use of:

- Notable examples of outstanding translations and well-known translators.
- Conceptual frameworks relevant to each unique historical era.
- Critical analysis of strategies used and their implications.

The study employs scholarly references (Bassnett, Venuti, Munday, Robinson) as well as cross-cultural case studies to guarantee exhaustive representation.

## Results

**Ancient Civilizations: Translation's Role in Sacred and Political Practices**

**Background and Implementation:** In ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and early empires, translation mainly served administrative or religious purposes. Its immediate consumers were rulers and gods, not the common people.

**Key Illustration:** The Rosetta Stone, which is from 196 BCE, contains an edict written in three different scripts: Greek, Demotic, and Egyptian hieroglyphs. The inscription was meant to make imperial decrees intelligible to different linguistic groups.

**Assessment:**

Here, translation operated as a political channel, maintaining the unity of the empire. The goal was functional equivalence—instead of theoretical comprehension—to ensure obedience across different cultures. The translator's role stayed hidden, serving the interests of the institution or monarch.

**Classical Antiquity: From Literalism to Sense-for-Sense**

**Context and Application:** Greek and Roman translators began to ponder upon translation as a cerebral pursuit, oftentimes mediating between fidelity and eloquence.

**Principal Representation**

In his rhetorical writings, Cicero (1st c. BCE) stated that he liked to avoid a word-for-word translation (*verbum e verbo*) for a more interpretive one (*sensum de sensu*).

**Analysis:**

Cicero's practice introduced stylistic equivalence: maintaining rhetorical beauty over formal structure. Translators were expected to recreate the effect, not imitate grammar. This was a precursor to communicative translation (Newmark, 1988).

**The Medieval Era: Theology, Transmission, and the Prevalence of Literal Interpretation**

**Context and Application:**

Religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church, controlled translation. The translator was a theologian, constrained by doctrine.

Example 1: St. Jerome's Vulgate Bible (4th century) translated Hebrew and Greek scriptures into Latin, making them accessible to Western Christianity. Jerome famously translated "Hebrew for Hebrew" yet also coined "non verbum e verbo, sed sensum de sensu."

Example 2: Toledo School of Translators (12th century): Scholars translated Arabic texts (Aristotle, Avicenna) into Latin via intermediate Castilian, contributing to Europe's scientific awakening.

**Analysis:**

While Jerome insisted on doctrinal adherence, he practiced lexical flexibility where called for. The Toledo movement illustrates cross-linguistic collaboration and the development of scholarly translation networks. Translation continued to be largely source-text oriented, but was also directed by precise goals.

**Renaissance and Humanism: Linguistics, Reformation, and Aesthetic Principles**

**Context and Application:** The Renaissance ushered in linguistic exploration, humanistic education, and the Reformation, requiring translations into vernaculars.

**Primary Instance:** Martin Luther's German Bible (1522–1534) was revolutionary. Luther wrote, "You must ask the mother in the house..." emphasizing the natural speech of ordinary people.

**Analysis:**

Luther's translation was a domestication strategy (Venuti, 1995). Its impact on the German language was immense, promoting democratization of religious discourse. Translation became a national and political movement, and translators took on the role of cultural reformers.

**The Enlightenment and Modernity: Rationality and National Identity Examined**

**Context and Application:** The Enlightenment promoted rationality, clarity, and national identity. Translation emphasized precision and philosophical clarity.

**Example:** Émilie du Châtelet translated Newton's Principia Mathematica into French, interpreting complex scientific concepts for non-English speakers.

**Analysis:**

Translation here became intellectual mediation. It expanded scientific literacy across languages. Translators had to coin terms, standardize terminology, and balance fidelity with comprehensibility—hallmarks of modern scientific translation.

**Romantic Period: The Translator as Innovative Intellectual**

**Context and Implementation:** Romanticism privileged sentiment, individual self, and the uniqueness of language. Translators became co-creators.

**Example:** Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813) proposed a twofold methodology:

- Foreignization: retaining original flavor.
- Domestication: changes for local audiences.

He preferred the latter, suggesting that readers should be "drawn to the author."

**Analysis:**

This marked a shift from translator as servant to the text to translator as interpreter of culture. Schleiermacher laid the groundwork for ethical translation, emphasizing preservation of otherness.

**The 20th Century: The Emergence of Translation Studies and Functionalist Theories**

**Context and Application:**

Post-WWII, translation became a discipline. Scholars like Nida, Catford, and Vermeer offered linguistic and functional theories.

Exemplary Case 1: Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence aimed for the same response in the TL audience as the SL audience.

Example 2: Skopos theory (Vermeer, 1989) asserted that translation must serve a purpose (skopos), not just imitate the original.

Analysis:

Nida's focus was receptor-oriented, especially in Bible translation. Vermeer emphasized target culture needs over source fidelity. Translation became a goal-driven activity, marking a transition toward functionalism.

The 21st Century: Digital Instruments, Localization, and Postcolonial Analysis

Contextualization and Implementation

The digital era introduced machine translation (MT), subtitling, software localization, and multimodal translation. Meanwhile, postcolonial and feminist theorists challenged dominant norms.

Example 1: Software localization: The phrase "File not found" needs cultural and linguistic adaptation in Uzbek as "Fayl topilmadi"—simple yet culturally appropriate.

Example 2: Postcolonial translation: Gayatri Spivak (1993) emphasized retaining the cultural and rhetorical integrity of marginalized texts, resisting domestication.

Analysis:

Technology demands speed and uniformity, while postcolonial theory demands cultural depth and resistance. Translators today balance these demands using hybrid approaches. Translation now merges technology, ethics, and intercultural negotiation.

## Discussion

Over the centuries, the function of translation has changed, but three ongoing tensions still remain:

Tension Manifestation

- Fidelity vs. Freedom Literal (Medieval) vs. Sense-for-sense (Renaissance, Nida)
- Source vs. Target Foreignization (Schleiermacher) vs. Domestication (Venuti, Luther)
- Language vs. Culture Enlightenment rationalism vs. Postcolonial and cultural translation

Translation's role has mirrored social priorities: religious fidelity in the medieval period, political reform during the Renaissance, nationalism in the Enlightenment, and now global cooperation and digital accessibility.

## Conclusion

The history of translation suggests a movement from literal reproduction to intentional mediation. As languages and cultures evolve, so must translation methods. Once sacrosanct and elite, translation has become a profession open to many; it now stands at the pivotal point of linguistic innovation, cultural understanding, and technological advancement. Understanding this development empowers translators to honor established practice while embracing innovation at the same time.

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