

## The Translator in Strange Lands\*

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### Abstract

*The main aim of this research paper is to give a holistic picture of the translation movement in Jordan, (the term Movement is used loosely here). A historical milieu of translation in the country is provided. The significance of the study is that the publication data of translations indicate the status and power of languages, and the socio-cultural politics behind this literary and linguistic activity. The focus will be on the status quo of translation, the policies that govern the work of translators, translation associations and the problems that hinder their work. The paper will shed light on the role of universities, the efficiency of the translation programs in the universities and whether or not these programs are well designed to supply the market with skilled and competent translators or acceptable pieces of translation. The paper benefits from a field research, interviews with translators, officials and directors of translation offices.*

**Key Words:** translation movement, socio-politics, the modern Jordan, translation programs, swinging sixties, translation hindrances, translation regulations

### 1. Introduction

It is not unveiling a secret to say that the existing state of affairs of translation and translators in the Arab world is not promising regardless of the sole, scattered and shy efforts of enthusiastic individuals and interested groups. Although the Arabic language occupies the sixth place in terms of the number of native speakers (the Chinese, English, Hindi, Spanish and Russian languages come ahead of Arabic), the statistics and research illustrate the gloomy status of translation from or into Arabic in the Arab world compared with other countries. The 2002 UN's Arab Human Development Report clearly proves that the translations in the Arab world do not, at best, exceed 350 books annually. This percentage is very little in terms of quantity and quality compared with Greece and Japan, for example. The first translates annually more than 1150 books per year – having in mind that the population of Greece is nearly 12 million, and the latter translates nearly 30 million pages annually.

The overall number of translated works in the Arab world since the days of Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom, established in AD830) is 10,000 books, which is the number of books Spain translates in one year (World Press Review, 2002; Obaid, 2009). Even worse, "Spain translates more books from English into its language than the entire Arab world has in 1000 years..." (Gearing, 2009). In the first half of the 1980s, the average number of translated books per one million, over five years, was 4.4 books (which is less than a book per one million Arabs per year). By way of comparison, in Hungary the average of translated books was 519 and it was 920 in Spain. The number of books translated into Arabic in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1970-2000) is 6881 books, which is equivalent to the number of translated books into the Lithuanian language. This fact becomes inexcusable when we know that the speakers of the Lithuanian language are nearly four million people only! In line with UNESCO figures, the translation movement in other European countries is more than that. In Germany, France and Britain, it is up to five times more than what is translated in the Arab world although the population of these countries represents only 1.33% of the Arab world population (Obaid, 2009.).

Not only this, but also most of the translations are from either Europe or the United States of America, and it is mainly about literature. The translations from other Asian, South American and African cultures are either ignored or rarely found. Translations in the scientific field were/are scarce (Asfour, 2007).

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\*The author is indebted in this title to Robert A. Heinlein's novel, *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

There was a time when translators fall into the illusion that culture is primarily literature and did not have into account that science is an essential component in of culture as well. Thus, the cultural problem in the Arab world is not only in the quality of the books translated, as it is usually publicized, but also in the quantity as well. The studies on translation are very few. Works such as the 1970 translated works of the Royal Scientific Society, Al-Na'uri (1985), Abdul Aziz (1990), Al-Khoury (1996), Shunnaq (1996, 2007 & 2012), Alawi (2000), Badran (2004), Ayyoub (2011), highlight the scarcity of examples of translations and research in translation studies.

The Efforts in this regard are fragmented, not consistent, depends on the temporal enthusiasm of scholars (mainly for academic promotion), and part of the request of official committees, conferences, and boards to carry out translation works. Had it not been for the dedication of the few number of translation specialists, many people in Jordan would have, most likely, lost interest in the translation movement completely. Conceivably, the shortage and irregular number of translated works in the field of translation during the seventies, eighties, nineties, and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century exemplify the fragmentation of the efforts as well as the insufficiency of translation research in most of the Arab countries in general and in Jordan in particular.

## **2. Historical Milieu: The Impact of Socio-Political Events on the Middle East**

It is unfortunate that the translation movement in the Arab world does not live up to the cultural history of the Arabs. During the Islamic Golden Age (8<sup>th</sup> century-13<sup>th</sup> century), the Arab world became the center of excellence for learning and philosophy. Translation was in the heart of all of it. The Arabs realized the importance of translation in the early stages of establishing what came to be a great civilization. Translation movement started in the Umayyad era (661 AD-750 AD) and flourished in the Abbasid era (750 AD-1258 AD). Al-Mâmouñ (786 AD-833 AD), the seventh Abbasid Caliph (reigned 813 AD-833 AD), is regarded as the patron of the cultural prosperity. In 830, he established the Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) to encourage the translation of works on philosophy, science, logic and astronomy from ancient civilizations into Arabic. Bayt al-Hikma "functioned as an academy, library and translation bureau, and had personnel of 65 translators, working from Greek, Syriac, Persian, Sanskrit and Aramaic" (Baker 2001: 320). In Baghdad, scholars worked to translate the texts into Arabic for the library of the House of Wisdom, preserving knowledge that would have otherwise been lost to time. Unfortunately, the flourishing era of translation did not last for long. After the collapse of the Islamic and Arab State in 1492, the translation movement declined. Since that date, the Arabic culture entered into oblivion; the great civilization began to recede due to many, mainly political, reasons.

The Arab countries suffered from occupation for many years: Portuguese, Spanish, Ottoman Turks, British, French, and Italian. The intense political events of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had great impact on the Middle East region (UNESCO 2008). These events, to mention but few, are: Theodor Herzl's (1860-1904) calls for the restoration of the Jewish State in the first Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland; the new European Domination of the Globe (British, French and Italian imperialism); the scramble for Africa; to 1914; the First World War (1914-1918) and its aftershock that caused major changes in the power balance; the end of old empire the decline of the Ottoman Empire; the imperialism in Asia; the United States presence on the world stage; the Second World War (1939-1945) and its aftermath that started the struggle of capitalist versus communist and led to establish the United States and the (ex) Soviet Union as the influential political powers.

In these political hurly-burly events, the Arab world seemed to have lived in oblivion – knowledge, thought and culture wise. The aforementioned international gigantic shifts of power affected their lives and history at all levels. The Arabs were at the receiving end of huge political decisions that decided their future. Their contribution in the politics of the day was marginal. Consequently, the prevailing pattern of life of the Arabs, in the midst of all these difficult times, was to make a living, protect safety, win their freedom, and gain independence. In general, the primary concern for most Arabs, as one would expect, was not to gain of knowledge or translating the heritage of the *other*. Cultural communication and bridging the gaps with the *colonizer*, was considered treason, unless it was for purpose. The great interest in the translations for military purposes during Muhammad Ali's reign in Egypt might be explained on these grounds. The efforts exerted in military translations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century paved the way to revive the translation movement in the Arab world. Individuals and then publishers took the first steps to translate literature. Scientific translations were barely of an interest. Translations were mainly plays, novels and musical works from, French in particular and, to a lesser extent, from English and Italian. Under the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, "translation activity focused on

official document and legal decrees ... [,] a grammar of spoken Arabic ... and a treatise on smallpox” (Baker, 2001: 322).

The gradual collective efforts of individuals and organization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century bore fruit. In the pre-independence era, in the first half of the 1940s, the Arab governments realized the importance of translation in the communication with the world.

As years went by, programs of translation were developed and Pan-Arab organizations were established. One of which was the Arabic Organization for Education, Culture and Science in Tunisia. “The recommendations of this committee” as Baker (2001: 324) states:

*Included developing common criteria for selecting texts for translation, reassessing the status of translators in the Arab world, establishing a coherent policy for language learning and translator training, setting up regional and Arab unions to represent translators, and encouraging theoretical research in translation. In addition to the government organizations, there were scattered, unorganized and unplanned efforts in the translation field by individuals.*

Translation movement in Jordan is no different from that of the Arab world; it is unsatisfactory to say the least. Jordanians fought against the inclusion of the eastern bank of The River Jordan in the Balfour Declaration (1917) and managed to maintain their, relatively, short history state that have meager natural resources. Jordan was established in 1921 as the Emirate of East Jordan, and won its independence in 1946 as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

### **3. The Change in the Swinging Sixties and its Repercussion**

The ups and downs of the political events after the independence of Jordan, the relations with the Palestinians, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, and the assassination of King Abdullah I in 1951, all led to a very busy and difficult life of the society in Jordan. Jordanians did not have the luxury to choose a particular type of life style; they, instead, adopted a straightforward choice: decent living and security over (translating) knowledge. The new King (Hussein) inherited a huge responsibility. In the 1950s and 1960s, the King and his people had to face serious, sensitive and critical issues that threatened the very existence of Jordan. Understandably, the main concern was given to the security of the people and stability of the “young” Jordan (Lunt 1988, Wilson 1987 and Redden, 1995). Since the establishment of their new Kingdom, Jordanians managed to pass through the thorny walks of politics of (Arab) friendly and brotherly countries. The socio-political liability of the Palestinians who sought refuge in Jordan as a result of two Arab-Israeli wars (1948 and 1967), and the 1968-1970 Palestinian-Jordanian unrest, added more pressure on Jordan’s economy. It was not until the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s that Jordan found internal peace and the building of the “modern Jordan”, as it were referred to, started.

### **4. The Modern Jordan: The Cultural Life**

At the time when Jordan did not have universities (the first university in Jordan – the University of Jordan – was founded in 1962), Jordanians used to seek undergraduate and/or postgraduate studies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and a number of other American and European universities. The beginning of the 1960s noticed the return of more graduates from these universities. This *return home* enriched the cultural life of Jordan, especially since the abovementioned countries were fertile ground for several political and cultural events. The diverse experience that the students/graduates gained contributed, in one way or another, to the formation of their thought and knowledge each according to the country s/he came from. Be it the Baathist, communist, Islamists, secularist or nationalist experiences, the socio-cultural life in Jordan was shaped accordingly. It was at this time that the seeds of the revival of the translation movement in Jordan were planted.

The huge Cultural Revolution in Europe that had its first stirrings in the 1950s was echoed in Middle East and led to cultural changes at different levels. The *revolution* had influenced the people’s way of life and resulted in the changing attitudes on a range of social, educational and economic issues. The *swinging sixties* that swept Europe had brought with it a package of the wave of *youth culture* which set itself against *The Establishment* views and all it supposedly stood for. Issues such as, liberalization, feminism, free love, peace, abortion, drug-taking, and the development of popular music were resounded in the Middle East *cosmopolitan* capitals.

The mixture of all of the socio-political changes paid off, particularly, on the translation *movement* level. In the 1961, the Jordanian Committee for Arabicization, Translation and Publishing was established.

If compared to the previous years, quite a number of books, relatively speaking, had been translated. Unfortunately, The Committee did not last for long; it was replaced in 1976 by the Arabic Language Academy. The Academy's main focus was the Arabicization of the University books (Shunnaq, 2012). However, attempts to translate novels, stories and dramatic texts continued for different reasons. The translation activities were not institutionalized. They heavily depended on unsystematic and individual efforts. In addition, there were no ample official records that could reflect the translated or interpreted works quantity or quality wise (Ibid.). Nevertheless, these efforts of individual translators, (commercial) offices of translation, and the devoted scholars in the field helped in keeping the translation issue alive during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The establishment of Yarmouk University, in 1976, in the Northern region of Jordan was a turning point and more than good news for the practitioners and devotees of translation.

### **5. Who is Running the Show in the Translation Field in Jordan**

The year 1984, at Yarmouk University Marked the establishment of the first MA program in Translation in Jordan; the program was hosted by the Language Center. It gained excellent reputation, graduated hundreds of MA holders in translation and, most importantly, revived the interest in translation in the minds of the new generation. Yet again, however, problems came to the scene. The controversy over who owns the translation program – i.e. whether to have the MA Program in Translation in the Department of English Language and Literature or to keep it in the Language Center – was the stick in the wheel of the progress of the program. Instead of working hand-in-hand to help in achieving the program goals and objectives, the dominance of the linguistic approach and linguists' bias and the Chairs of the English Department misunderstanding of the concept of translation, were a let-down for all of those who were ambitious to see the MA program find new shores. But it was not to be regardless of the reputation it gained. The story was repeated line by line at the University of Jordan. The Language Center Diploma in Translation Program faced the same destiny of the MA Program in Translation at Yarmouk University. The program was transferred to the Department of English. There, the Translation Program seemed not to face success because of nearly the same reasons that Yarmouk University experienced. The contention, the wrangle and the conflict of interest over translation programs ended for a while when the Department of Translation was established at Yarmouk University in the academic year 2008/2009 (discussions in The Jordanian International Conference on Translation, Yarmouk University, 2010).

The establishment of Private Universities in Jordan in 1989 helped in pressing forward translation as an academic field. Petra University (firstly established under the name The Girls University), Philadelphia University, German Jordanian University among other universities set up programs in translation. It was like a *snowball effect*; it did not take much time for the universities and students alike to realize the importance of translation studies due to two reasons. Firstly, from the universities' perspective – financial wise – the increased number of the students enrolled in the translation programs meant new revenue. Secondly, from the students' perspective, the translation jobs were desperately needed in the globalized market and disturbed region that brought with it English speaking (American) forces and military bases in Qatar, Bahrain and Iraq, helped in opening new doors to translation graduates. Once one university started the teaching translation, other universities followed suit. The governmental (Public) universities came late to the scene. The major focus of most governmental universities in Jordan continued to be on literature and linguistics. Translation was referred to, if any at all, in two places: firstly, the Departments of Language and Literature undergraduate programs by adding one or two introductory courses on translation (as compulsory or elective courses). Secondly, translation was referred to in the themes of conferences on literature and linguistics.

No translation department was established in any governmental university; not until 2008/2009 when Yarmouk University, as mentioned earlier, established the Department of Translation to be the first governmental university to graduate students with a BA and MA in the field of translation studies. The main objective of the Department is to provide its students with knowledge and training in translation to enable them either to pursue higher education or seek translation careers in private and public sectors inside and outside Jordan. On the top priorities of the Department is to hold seminars and conferences on translation and interpreting as an attempt to breathe life into the translation movement in Jordan (Shunnaq, 2012).

The Jordanian Translators' Association (JTA) was established in 1993 under the auspices of Ministry of culture. The importance of the JTA lies in the fact that it formed, for the first time in the cultural history of Jordan, an umbrella for translators and interpreters.

It is considered as a culmination of the individual efforts of the devotees of translation, the Jordanian Committee for Arabicization, the Arabic Language Academy, and the universities' undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Among its main aims is to endorse the translation movement in Jordan. The JTA was linked to the Arab Translators Federation (ATF) in 1995 and to the International Federation of Translators (FIT) in 1998. JTA also publishes an increasing number of books translated from and into Arabic, articles and studies that address various aspects and problems of translation. Although it came late to the scene of translation, the government involvement in providing support for the translation movement is vital. This support was evident through the project: *Translation and Arabicization Movement in Jordan*, a project funded by the Scientific Research Support Fund (SRSF), which was established in 2007. It is administered by a Board of Directors headed by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHE). The project is conducted by a number of academics at Jordanian universities. It aims to highlight the translation and Arabicization movement in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; the work is driven by the hope that it concludes with recommendations that would enhance the translation and Arabicization movement as well as cultural and educational process in the Jordan (Shunnaq, 2012). Optimistically, the end result of the project would be of much use to libraries, translators and information centers in Jordan and abroad.

Other attempts to support the translation movement in Jordan, such as those of a number of private universities and the Ministry of Culture, the collaboration of the (semi) private sector helped in holding numerous conferences, seminars and meetings specialized in translation issues. The Ministry of Culture announced an award for the best translated work in 2002. Other universities, such as Philadelphia Private University, launched, since 2004, an annual award for best book translated and honored scholars of translation in Jordan. But the problem remains that these efforts are not being made on a regular basis; they are instantaneous, seasonal, or born of a temporal enthusiastic moment.

## **6. The Obstacles, Challenges and Problems of the Present-Day Situation**

The vital role that the English language continues to undertake in the field of international communications, and the growing influence of the Arab region in international relations has created a growing demand for translators and interpreters from English to Arabic and vice versa. Translation is hard work and those involved in it still face practical difficulties. The problems of the translation studies and profession are nearly the same in most of the Arab world countries. In Jordan, the problems can be summed as follows:

### **1. Lack of Planning and Cooperation**

The boom of translation in the Arab world is always linked to the flourishing of the Arab culture. For a long time, the Arab culture went through a serious crisis and suffered from problems threatening its future in nowadays (English) globalized world. Consequently, the interest in translation faded as well. One of the most important reasons for the weakness of the translation into Arabic is the lack of planning and cooperation between the Arab countries. There is no long-term State support for the translation movement on the national level. On a large scale, there is no pan Arab planning not even from the Arab League Departments. There is no clear vision to include the Arab countries in one policy regarding translation. A certain book, for example, may be translated more than once in more than one Arab country. To reach a kind of integration, state efforts should be saved, one expects, for translating other works. In addition, language and translation specialists in the Arab world did not agree between themselves about the terms of scientific, medical, technical and a certain pattern or formula in the language published. Even the Arab Language Academies did not have the upper hand in bringing the translation actors under one roof. They did not succeed to characterize terminology unification in the Arab world, regarding both content and form. Furthermore, there is a lack of cooperation between universities and professional associations, especially in these critical times of the changing history of the Middle East.

Translation is not a long term continuous process in the Arab world, Jordan is included, which makes the image of the overall approach of translations movement darker. There are attempts to revive the translation movement; among these efforts are the roles played by the World Thought Institution in Kuwait, the Ministry of Culture in Syria and the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi, the Arab Organization for Translation in Beirut, the National Project for Translation, and the Translation and Arabicization Movement Project in Jordan. However, all these efforts are not enough. They are hindered by the lack of cooperation and continuing planning, and are too weak to face the great challenges of the rapid changes in the world today.

## 2. Freedom Margins

The Jordanian constitution provides for freedom of expression, press and publication. However, the government(s) of the day does not fully practice these rights. The government strictly continues to enforce bans on the publication of selected books on political, social, religious, and moral basis. Foreign films are also edited/censored prior to broadcast. The media is directly and indirectly censored. The grievance of the authorities' censorship creates, between now and then, a clash between journalists, men of letters, scholars, translators, and activists. The Internet is not exempted from the state's control although the Internet censorship in Jordan is relatively light, with filtering selectively applied to only a small number of sites. Jordan is engaged in selective internet filtering in the political area and as showing no evidence of filtering in the social, conflict/security.

Despite King Abdullah II (King of Jordan) many calls for the government to "take quick, concrete and practical steps to launch a genuine political reform process, to *strengthen democracy* and provide Jordanians with the *dignified life they deserve*" (Derhally, 2011), the regulations/laws governing politics and public freedoms remain a subject of concern in Jordan. The ups and downs of the ambiguous application of the laws and regulations regarding the freedom of speech came to the scene recently. In 2013, the Press and Publications Department (PPD) initiated a ban on Jordanian electronic news websites which had not been registered and licensed by the government. The order issued to Telecommunication Regulatory Commission contained a list of over 300 websites to be blocked. This caused uproar in paper and electronic newspaper alike. Pro and against the decision articles, debates and heated discussions were the main issues in the country. In its annual reports, the National Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) in Jordan concludes that media freedoms deteriorated in the last decade.

Shrinking margins of the freedom of expression and the ambiguous rules, instructions and by-laws of Press and Publications are the most important obstacles that the translator faces. The translators (and the translated works), in Jordan, abide by the Press and Publications Law. Therefore, books, novels and translations, such as the *Collection of Poetry* of the poet Islam Samhan (2008), Nahed Hattar's *Book Left-Wing Political Activist, on Two Fronts*; Haider Haider's *A Feast for the Sea Herbs* (1983, reprinted in 2000); Salman Rushdie's (the Anglo-Indian writer) *The Satanic Verses* (1988), to mention but few, are banned on moral, political and religious grounds. Banned books could be judged to be obscene, to inflame religious hostility and damage Jordan's relations with the neighboring Arab countries. However, it is important to mention in this regard that the invisibility of translated publications does not mean that they do not exist. Banned works can be found if the seller trusts the customer who wants them (Al-Hamad, 2001).

## 3. Random Fragmentation

Most of the translated works are predominated by commercial nature. This led to unmatched Chaos. That is why many target audiences would doubt the worth of the translated works. In addition, there is no formal policy for translation, no statistics of Arab translators and translated works. This bleak fact about statistics in Jordan illustrates the weak status of the study of languages, and the socio-cultural politics behind the publication data of this literary and linguistic activity. Likewise, the lack of interest of Publishing/Distribution Houses is even worse, "there is no fully-authorized organization to control the translation and interpretation movement in this country ... [and] not all translated works are deposited in the National Library of the Ministry of Culture" (Shunnaq, 2012: 3). One reason behind the reluctance of Publishing Houses to publish translated works is the financial returns in comparison with the hardship involved in the whole process of translation and publishing. From the researchers' perspective, the problem becomes more intricate because they do not find palpable statistical data or records when they want to conduct research in the field of translation. Translation is not regulated which affects the quality of the translated works (Ayyoub, 2011). Regrettably, the fragmented and random individual efforts of devotees of translation remain the main unsolved issue of the current phase in Jordan.

## 4. Jordan Lacks a National Institute for Empowering Translators and Interpreters

In Jordan, there is no one national institute for translators and interpreters empowerment. The *places* responsible for the translation activity are either non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Profit Organizations or private (commercial) offices, (Ibid., 59-60). The prestige that the Arabic language gained in the international forums following the United Nations' decision in 1973 to adopt Arabic as an official language did not receive equal attention neither by translators nor by the Arab states.

Moreover, the huge amount of information of scientific articles and books produced in developed countries increased the pressure on the translator whether in Jordan or in the rest of the Arab world. The expansions in information technology and the open access to loads of technical terminology require competent professional translators; i.e. those who are educated and trained through university education. Therefore, a persistent need for the translation of scientific and socio-cultural knowledge is needed at this moment in time. The development witnessed at all levels of life emphasizes the need for establishing accredited (academic) institutions or centers for professional training of translators and interpreters who are prepared to hold jobs in governmental, private-sector companies and international agencies.

According to Stewart (2008), professional translation is derived from vocational translation whereby trainee translators are prepared for the translation market. That said, it is not the market that should decide the design of the training material “to fit the labor gaps that open momentarily in the industry ... nor should we be turning our back on what is happening as new technologies shape new professional sectors” (Pym, 2006: 8). Determining the appropriate approach and the suitable criteria will not remain a priority until the translation specialization becomes generally recognized. Training translators is not an academic track but, “it is an ongoing ‘in service’ professional vocational training, similar to training computer programmers, auditors and customs officials. Ideally, one would look for a single approach to professional translator training” (AlQinai, 2011: 20). The training needs to be, to use Pym’s words (2003:481), “a multicomponent competence, involving sets of skills that are linguistic, cultural, technological and professional with the ultimate objective of meeting market demand”.

The urgent need to provide translators to meet the needs of the modern cultural life and the remarkable development in all walks of life, calls for establishing specialized and highly professional centers for training translators. But this need had been hampered by “the prevalence of linguistics-oriented approaches that offer a truncated view of the empirical data they collect” Venuti (1998: 1). Whereas, translation teaching is “an open field which calls for experiment and innovation”, as Wilss referred to (1996: 193). It is true that trainees need appropriate substantial theoretical framework in translation. Colina (2002), for example, believes that translation courses at the university are and should be academic rather than professional. However, trainees need not academic theories; rather, they need professional skills, because, as Pym (2005: 3-6) argues, translation theories are “abstruse and useless; only professionals know the realities of translation”. By the same token, Nord (1991) introduced a functional perspective approach to training by combining professional realism with pedagogical progression, (skopos theory), and Kiraly (2000), suggested parting with the approach that focuses on the teacher (a social constructivist theory)

It is unfortunate that most universities in the Arab countries are neither taking the responsibility in initiating quality translator-training program nor adapting a wide-ranging approach to provide the translation trainees, as well as professional translators, with modules in parallel with practical skills in cultural, social and linguistic studies. An approach, as AlQinai (2011: 20) states, that prepares trainees to “research terminology and background information, consult experts and refer to documentation from previous conferences with an emphasis on memory, attention, and automaticity”. The wide-ranging approach will result in “tailor-made training programs on translation memory tools such as Trados, Déjà vu and Wordfast for the role they play in the modern translation world” (Thawabteh, 2009). Regardless of the attempts made by a number of Arab universities to pay more attention to curriculum designed specifically for translation, these attempts lack continuation, support and knowledge of the market. An overview of the translation and interpretation curricula in departments of translation at the Jordan University of Science and Technology, Yarmouk University, German Jordanian University, and Jadara University demonstrates the weakness of interest in translation studies. The current situation of translation and syllabus design needs major adjustment and modification. In theory, the outcome of the curriculum is meant to provide the market with translators and interpreters who are able to deal with different fields, and can work at Satellite Channels, international conferences, international meetings, press conferences, interviews, and negotiations. In practice, to use Avval’s (2012) words “[t]heories are taught, but not their application in translation practice. What to translate is said but not how to translate; dos and don’ts are given; but not how to, and the result is what we see in the market: low-quality translations”. Therefore, the first step of change in the translation programs in Jordanian universities must be in the curriculum of translation courses to keep the translation movement alive. To achieve this, serious study is to be conducted to evaluate the translation programs, the qualification of the translation instructors, methods of teaching and the way the courses are implemented.

The collective efforts that are exerted in this regard in the few departments of translation in a number of Jordanian universities proved to be not enough. Among the reasons for this could be the universities administration lack of support and their misunderstanding of the importance of translation and the shortage of money resources.

### **5. *The Few Numbers of Translation Professors/Specialists***

One of the main hindrances in the field of translation in Jordan (as well as the Arab countries) is the few numbers of Professors or specialists in translation. There is no data collected in any research in Jordan to indicate the number of professors or specialists in translation studies in the Jordanian universities. The image is blurred when it comes to the number of the professional translators and interpreters that could be working within a given national or regional industries. This could be due to the fact that translation was not studied or taught as separate field; for a long time the study of translation was within the literary or the linguistic disciplines. Thus, translation was taught by linguists, but not necessarily translation specialists. Most of those involved in the translation profession were/are with no qualifications in translation or they lack experience. In most Jordanian universities, many language teachers jumped on to the band wagon of translation. They were driven by the *myth* that knowing two languages qualifies them to work in the field of translation. Their work, at its best, is “closer to that of copy editors and proof-readers but with the addition of a knowledge of foreign languages and an ability to use computer programs for pre- and post-editing of machine translation (MT)” (Hennessy, 2011: 1). Most of the universities in the Arab world still hire language lecturers to teach translation. This practice is problematic, as Lederer (2007: 17) states, because teaching translation needs an expert practitioner in order to understand translation procedures and problems as well as to understand what is expected from translators in the job market.

However, being aware of the need to meet the great demand for translation, the departments of translation started to offer its outstanding graduates scholarships to seek higher education in translation studies. The number is not enough though. The funding for these students remains a major obstacle. Understanding the lack of economic resources in Jordan, the departments of translation as well as their graduates do not seem to complain much.

### **6. *The Easiness of Licensing Translation Organizations, Associations, Centers, and Offices***

The easiness and the *elastic* laws and regulations of licensing translation offices in Jordan are adding more sticks in the translation movement wheel. Licensing presupposes, simply, a continuing relationship between the parties and when one party or the other is not satisfied with the terms of the contract, a relationship will not be possible. The measure of how successful the relationship depends on a contract with mutually acceptable terms. Given the complexity of licensing agreements in general, a variety of shocking issues in licensing translation offices, centers and institution in Jordan are of significance. Among these issues are: standards, ethics, product liability, patent misuse, and intellectual property.

Licensing translation offices in Jordan is tripartite bewildering process. Firstly, legally, translation offices (regardless of the name they are registered under, be it: an organization, association, agency, center, or institution) are licensed under the Press and Publication Department (PPD) laws and regulations (PPD is a division and a subsidiary of the Prime Ministry of Jordan. Secondly, activity wise, the translation offices are linked with the Ministry of Culture. Thirdly, profit wise (commercially), the translation offices are linked with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Furthermore, the licensing part itself of translation offices is not difficult. A quick look at the form of the Department of Press and Publication for licensing translation offices, divulges the rapidly increasing number of translation offices. The application form is one page, divided into two sections: one for the owner with general questions to fill, and the other is for the Director with the same general questions and these are: the name; place and date of birth; religion; mother's (maiden) name; type of ID, date and place of issue; marital status; name of wife/husband; education qualifications, university, permanent address; phone number; national number; (years of) experience, JD15 application fees and a JD500 license issuing fees.. The applicant had to submit copies of the following documents: the ID; a certificate of no criminal record; university certificate(s) and transcripts; a certificate of experience. As the questions in the application exemplify, the information is general. It applies to any profession, any specialty and any field of work.

There is nothing in the application form that asks for the translators' qualifications or experience and there are no exams or interviews either. Moreover, there is nothing in the form that indicates or emphasizes that the owners' and the Directors' of the translation offices must have a degree in translation, experience and knowledge in the translation studies. Hence, all it takes to start a business in translation in Jordan is to have a passport in hand, copies of the university transcripts, ID, Certificate of No Criminal Record, and to have JD515 ready.



The awaiting period to officially establish the office/center/organization/association, including the red tape process, is two weeks to a month maximum. This explains the enormous number of the unqualified and commercial translation offices. In 2011, there were 246 of the offices listed in Ayyoub's study (2011: 71-83). The number is rising as this research is being written. This figure does not include the stationary offices that covertly carry out the work of translation.

It is worth mentioning that the committees that evaluate and then authorize these offices are not qualified in the field of translation. The papers provided by these offices are not scrutinized. There are no cross-checks with the standards of the Jordan Translators Association's (JTA), which is supposed to be the umbrella for the translators and translation movement (the International Conference on Translation, 2009). Furthermore, there are no accreditation policy, no criteria that underlines the importance of being well informed, no standards of assessing in advance the offices strengths and weaknesses, no personal interviews for translators by a professional committee, and no *national* proficiency exams for the translators' extent of competence and expertise. There are no post licensing process, no follow up of any sort. Responses to complaints about the poor quality of the translation produced by the translation offices are very slow, if any at all. Other problems include the commercial dominance over the quality of the translated works. It is also noted that a very good number of the translators use the computer software programs such as, google translate, Bing, Babylon, AlWafi Golden, AlMisbar, and Tarjim to mention but few. The outcome is translations that are usually inaccurate, make no sense and need editing and retranslation in most cases. Most of the employees (workers) are either fresh graduates with a degree in English Language and Literature or amateurs. Most of the translation offices seek financial gains at the expense of the level of the scientific value and moral standards.

Encouraged by the absence of authorities' control and post licensing follow up, stationary offices were tempted to intrude on the translation field. In a barefaced and explicit abuse of all ethical standards, the Press and Publication Law and the Intellectual Property Law, the owners of these offices hire *people* to write or to download and then translate graduation research papers on behalf of university students. Most of them are 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who do not have a good command of the source language and the target language they deal with.

The Ministry of Culture did not give a well-founded answer regarding the violations by these offices, nor did the Press and Publication Department. When asked 'why is it that the Ministry is not supporting the translation movement by enforcing the regulations to stop or even sue these offices for the wrongdoing?' the Ministry of Culture representative answered diplomatically, "the Ministry is doing its best to support all cultural activities including the translation activities, and that the rules are applied strictly" (Ministry of Culture Representative October 2013). In 2010, the spokesman of the Ministry of Culture response was more direct: "there are no laws that support the translation movement in Jordan. We only have the law of the intellectual right" (cited in Ayyoub, 2011: 20). Although three years separate both responses, they sound the same. The Ministry of Culture's responses prove its policy towards the support to the translation movement. The policy is, as it can be deduced from the two responses, that the Ministry of Culture is committed to neutrality, regarding outrageous violations of its own laws, when it should not. The responses elucidate the fuzzy role of the authorities and their failure to provide the necessary support for the translation movement in the country.

The diffident role of Ministry of Culture, its flexible laws and regulations, and the mushrooming of the easy-regulated offices/stationaries/institutions of translation resulted in poor and manipulated translations, changing the translation process into a pure commercial field, creating *shops* of translation, as it is referred to by the students, the lack of trust in the Ministry of Culture's involvement in the cultural scene in Jordan, and the lack of conviction in the concept of translation. Consequently, people fail to recognize the importance translation as a profession.

### **7. The Shortage of a Sworn Translator**

The number of sworn translators and interpreters in the Arab world is small. In Jordan, the sworn translators are nonexistent, if the common European and the US *sworn* laws system are to be applied. There are, however, quite different ways in which the sworn translations are handled. Firstly, officially, translators are certified by legal representatives. A translator is sworn before a judge in the Ministry of Justice or legal representative – a solicitor in the UK or a notary in Scotland. The legal professional does not verify the quality of the translation but merely satisfies himself as to the translator's identity.

But practically translators could work without being certified at all). Secondly, a group of *authorized* (the words that is usually substitutes the word *sworn*) translators are tested and certified by the Ministry of Justice or any other state institution. Thirdly, authorized/sworn translators can be recognized on the basis of educational qualifications alone. In Jordan, the state of affairs is more complicated. People confuse between sworn *translators* and sworn *translations*. To most people there is not *sworn translator* concept; rather, it is the *translations* that are the main focus in the accreditation or authorization process but not necessarily the *translator*. Nonetheless, a number of translation seekers believe that a professional translator has to be “certified” or “sworn” to do the job. From their perspective, certifying has no bearing on the quality of a translation. It serves instead to identify the translator’s qualifications, so that s/he is liable. For example, if a document is willfully mistranslated or carelessly translated, the translator could be charged with perjury or negligence.

In the absence of legal references of laws and regulations that govern or clarify the issue of the sworn translator and sworn translations, the offices of translation or stationary offices are the great winners. They benefit the most from this volatile and complex situation. Their work – authorized or not – remains lucrative, which brings us back to the aforementioned discussion. It is common to find stickers, leaflets, adverts, and to receive mobile phone text messages that announce the availability of the services of certified translations and translators. Generally, the main content of these advertisements is:

*Do you require certified translations of your English/Arabic English documents for submission to the (X) authorities? (Y) Translation Office/Service specializes in certified translations from/to English into Arabic/French/German/Spanish. Our prices competitive and our pricing structure are simple. For a firm, no obligation quotation, please contact us via e-mail or telephone*

Therefore, in terms of these different approaches, it seems challenging to envisage a common Jordanian as well as an Arab platform for authorized/sworn translators in a politically divided Arab world that have different socio-cultural and legal laws. An analysis of the current situation in Jordan and the Arab countries demonstrates, firstly, the discrepancy that exists in the methods used. Secondly, the current situation illustrates that many Arab countries have lists of sworn interpreters even though the requirements for being included on these lists do not meet any standards of minimum competence. Thirdly, there is no accredited body to provide basic criteria for sworn translators to attain a high level of proficiency, and provide its qualified members with special seals to attach to a translation.

## **7. Conclusion**

More than in any time in history, the need to engage with scholarly work on translation and interpreting is becoming persistent both within Jordan and the other Arab countries. Misunderstanding the concept of translation, the lack of support to the movement of translation, and the lack of appreciation to the value of translation come at a time when the world is experiencing a huge revolution in the telecommunications sector, which led to significant breakthrough in the field of information. “In the ‘global society’ of the year 2000”, in Beaugrande (2000) words, “the social, institutional, and commercial importance of translation would be impossible to deny”. The memories of the Islamic-Arabic Golden Age that was based on the ancient Chinese, Persians, Greeks, and Romans works are still haunting the Arab descendants. Most Arab countries produced less research, less achievements and less translated works, than the majority of non-Arab countries. The Data regarding the number of the translated works is not consistent and in most times, not available. Regardless of the serious research and the endeavor of a number of enthusiastic specialists in translation, the translation movement in Jordan, today, is still suffering from many problems and difficulties.

To sum up, the translation movement in the Arab world faces four challenges associated with the official, Arab world, the community, and the pedagogy levels. Firstly, on the official level, the challenges are as diverse as the lack of support, the confusing and changeable institutional policies, and no clear State regulations or oversight of licensing translation and interpreting services. Secondly, on the Arab world level, the problems are the scarcity of collaboration between Arab countries in the field of translation, the lack of funding from the wealthy Arab nations and the public and private organizations. Thirdly, on the community level, the socio-political and socio-economic problems have hindered the work of the translators making it difficult to enhance their capacity in translation productivity. Furthermore, the cultural taboos and censorship of the day had great impact on translation. Fourthly, on the pedagogy level, problems are more complicated.

They include the non-existent of classroom facilities and teaching methods, techniques and aid, the lack of uniformity of standards in all aspects of certification, the poor quality of translators training across the Arab countries, the shortage of training institutions, and the unwillingness of university administrations to assist the efforts that aim to increase translation productivity. The background of the translation lecturers is, generally, weak. The dominance of linguists and the linguistic approach on the translation field overshadowed the importance of the many translation topics. Consequently, the outcome of the undergraduate and postgraduate programs of translation and interpretation seemed to encourage the contempt of the students and the market alike.

In conclusion, the misapprehension of the *concept of translation* led to the perception by many people that translation is an unworthy and a second-rate activity (Burian, 2000). The remedy is in the poison. The solutions for the majority of the difficulties, challenges and problems of the translation movement in Jordan are within the same problems. What is missing is a State, university, and teachers/lecturers will, funding from public and private organizations, adopting a theory and practice approach, having more collaboration between the departments of translation in the Arab countries, and professional interpreting training centers.

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