



Examination of the Republic Period Translation Office in Terms of Being an Institutional Model for Translation Activities

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Abstract

Throughout Turkish history, some organized attempts were made from time to time within the scope of translation activities, and these activities were carried out through state-organized societies, delegations, committees, or offices. Both the initiatives made in the Ottoman period and some translation activities after the proclamation of the Republic were conducted within the framework that we can describe as institutionalization from modern-day perspective, and various translation studies were put forward. It is purposed in this study to examine the Translation Office, one of the institutions established by the managers of the period so as to carry out translation studies in the past, in a multi-dimensional aspect. The Translation Office was observed with its administrative, cultural, economic, political, or ideological dimensions, and it was examined whether the existing structure can be used as an institutional model for translation in the relevant context. In the study, initially, the definition of institutionalization was presented through a general framework and discussed through the above-mentioned dimensions, and some evaluations were conducted on the necessity of institutionalization in translation activities. Then, the organizational structure of the Translation Office was analyzed in terms of the period when it showed its existence. Finally, an answer was sought to the question of whether the obtained data can provide an institutional model in the context of translation. As a result of the analysis, it was concluded that the Translation Office can be a model for institutionalization in translation in terms of management and functioning. However, when evaluated on the basis of the sustainability principle, it was observed that it could not fulfill modern-day institutionalization requirements for various reasons, and it was seen that it did not fully represent as an institutional model for this reason.

Key Words: Translation Office, Institutionalization, Institutional Translation, Institutionalization in Translation

Introduction

Translation has been considered as a sub-field of other disciplines such as Linguistics and Literature throughout history, and it has only started to be accepted as a discipline on its own after the 1970s. Even though some studies on both the theoretical and applied fields of translation have been carried out so far, the necessity of an institutional approach to translation emerged in the late 1980s.

It is an undeniable fact that translation activities are concentrated in the same direction as multiculturalism and multilingualism have become a reality of today's world. This situation brings with it the need for a standardization for translation activities. At this point, it is of great importance to develop an institutional approach to translation and to embody the approach to be put forward through a model.

There are various initiatives to carry out translation activities in different periods of Turkish history. It is seen that the periods when translation studies were carried out in an organized manner were divided into "the last times of the Ottoman Period, the period when Hasan Ali Yücel served as the Ministry of National Education in the Republican Period, and finally the time period from the 1980s to the present" (Kayaoğlu, 1998: 71). During these periods, various attempts were made in translation activities, which we can define as institutionalization today. However, when the literature on the concept of institutionalization in translation activities was scanned, no model

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was found in this context. Almost all of the studies on the subject could not go beyond making an introduction to the subject and only made general recommendations.

In the first part of the study, the definition of institutionalization, its basic indicators and the benefits of institutionalization will be mentioned in order to deal with the issue of institutionalization in its most general terms. Later, the concept of institutionalization will be tried to be examined with its administrative, cultural, economic, political, or ideological dimensions.

An Overview of Institutionalization

When the word institutionalization is searched on web page of Turkish Language Association (TLA) to see what the word meaning of institutionalization is, such definitions as “to become institutionalized, to become organized, to gain continuity” are encountered (Turkish Language Association, 2020). When these definitions are examined, it is understood that being organized and based on the principle of continuity are necessary at the basis of the institutionalization action.

When the literature is examined, it is possible to come across various definitions of what the concept of institutionalization is. However, it would be a more meaningful approach to evaluate institutionalization through the concept of institution. For example, Even-Zohar, one of the important names in the field of translation studies, defines the institution as a power that determines what will be liked by the society, decides which norms forming the society will be, and in this context, holds the authority of reward and punishment (Translation Studies, 2020). Based on this approach, it will be more effective to examine the definitions related to institutionalization in the literature.

Institutionalization is defined as “the process of bringing a different and distinctive identity from other businesses” for any company which has the ability to have standards and pre-prepared procedures that are independent of individuals, to follow the ever-changing environmental conditions and to establish systems to adapt to them, to create the organizational chart in accordance with the developments over time, to transform only the communication and business methods specific to its own structure into a culture (Karpuzoğlu, 2004: 26). In another study on the subject, institutionalization is defined as “the establishment of relevant structures and processes for the continuation of the activities of an institution, which is essential, for the institution to produce its own methods without being dependent on the personal methods of the employees, and for the work to run smoothly even if the employees leave the institution.” In other words, institutionalization is the establishment of the necessary structure for a business to continue and develop its activities without being dependent on the existence of individuals (Bezirci, 2013: 62). The most basic point observed in both definitions is that institutions can continue to exist without being dependent on individuals and act within certain standards in their activities.

The concept of institutionalization is not possible when businesses use the term only in their discourse. To be able to say that any business has a fully institutional structure, it must have certain indicators, the details of which will be given below. As a result of the research conducted in the literature, the indicators of institutionalization appear in a multidimensional way in many studies. In the most inclusive way, the main indicators of the institutionalization of the business are listed as the creation of organizational culture, the professionalization of business management, the training activities carried out to keep up with the developments and changes in the field of activity, the perspective of institution on people, the existence of a systematic organizational structure, conducting business activities in the light of a pre-decided plan and policies, standardizing work/processes, and establishing an internal audit system (Bayrak, 2005: 17; Akdoğan, 2000: 112; Güner, 2006: 51). When the basic indicators of institutionalization are thought, it is possible to see that eliminating the dependence on human is not sufficient for institutionalization. Institutionalization is a concept that should be evaluated as a whole with its administrative, cultural, economic, political or ideological, and educational dimensions.

The fact that no model has been put forward concretely in the context of institutionalization in translation activities is a major shortcoming for the relevant field. Of course, it would not be wrong to think that the institutionalization approach, which receives positive reactions from all stakeholders in terms of total quality in every field it is applied, will also be a useful practice in terms of translation activities. In order to be able to talk about an institutionalization in the field of translation, first of all, the consideration of the conditions of the period in which the action will take place, the determination of the administrative scheme suitable for the action, the consideration of cultural elements, the determination of the policy or ideology to be adopted, the planning of educational activities in order to keep up with the changing conditions and new developments, supervision mechanism need to be provided. It is of great importance to establish a legislation in line with the consensus of all stakeholders in order to standardize the business and operating processes of the mentioned dimensions.

In order to create such a comprehensive institutionalization model in terms of translation activities, it would be useful to examine the structure of the Translation Office, which can be considered as the most successful in terms of the product put forward among the institutions established within this framework with its practices in the past. Examining the structure of this institution in detail in the context of the dimensions required for institutionalization in translation activities will give important clues for an institutionalization model that can be created in the field of translation in the future.

Necessity of Institutionalization in Translation Activities

In the most general framework, institutionalization strengthens the reputation of the institution. Strengthening reputation increases the efficiency of the institution. The increase in the efficiency of the institution means that the profitability will increase in a direct proportion. The above-mentioned developments can be easily observed in businesses where institutionalization is fully established.

After mentioning the most basic developments that the concept of institutionalization provides to the business, it is useful to mention what elements institutionalization should have that envisage a more accurate and smooth functioning of operational affairs. These elements can be summarized as follows:

- “Creating an organizational structure suitable for the purposes,
- Writing job and job descriptions,
- Establishment of internal regulations,
- A professional management by distributing authority and responsibilities” (Sönmez and Toksoy, 2011: 18).

The institutionalization that will occur as a result of the factors listed above will also increase the visibility of the business in terms of functioning. It would not be wrong to say that structures based on institutionalization in terms of functionality are getting stronger day by day both in terms of sustainability and economy.

It is necessary to consider to what extent institutionalization, which provides benefits in every field that the business needs, especially in managerial, is applicable in translation activities or whether institutionalization is necessary in translation activities. However, while thinking about this, the fact that it is not correct to base institutionalization on a single and predetermined fixed criteria should also be taken into consideration because institutionalization will differ according to the sector, structure, size, characteristics, and culture of the business. For this reason, in order to be able to talk about an institutionalization in terms of translation, it should be thoroughly examined by considering the characteristics of the culture in which the translation will be carried out, what kind of reasons it will be made, what the expectation will be after the translation, and how the translation will work.

Before discussing whether institutionalization is necessary in translation activities or what kind of institutionalization model should be if institutionalization is necessary in the relevant field as in other sectors, it is useful to examine the translation activities, which were done by the state in the past, and which we can define as institutional or at least organized from today's perspective. In this way, seeing the pros and cons of the past practices, which can be defined as institutionalization initiatives now, can give important clues for the institutionalization model that is planned to be created. “The first translation activity systematically carried out by the delegations in the Ottoman period took place in the Tulip Era. In this period, instead of establishing an inclusive institution for all translation activities, there is a tendency to form a committee for each work to be translated” (Kayaoğlu, 1998: 76). Therefore, translation activities remained very limited.

The Privy Council, which can be defined as a more comprehensive institutionalization initiative from today's perspective, was founded on July 18, 1851. Before its opening, a declaration was prepared for this establishment. In the prepared declaration, the purpose of establishment of the council, the number of members, their qualifications and the election procedures of the members, the working style of the council, and the services it would provide were determined in detail. The council, which carried out translation activities for a certain period of time, was closed due to political, cultural, economic, domestic, and foreign events. This qualification of the council also provided a roadmap for the institutions to be established for translation activities after it.

After the Privy Council, which was responsible for carrying out translation activities as of 1862, lost its effectiveness, it was decided to establish a Translation Society affiliated to the Ministry of Education in 1865, upon the need for translation activities. Like the Privy Council, the purpose of establishment of this society, the

number of members, qualifications and duties of the members, the way the society works and what services it would provide were clearly determined. The society later terminated its activities due to financial reasons.

After the Translation Society, many institutions were established with similar methods in the following years until the end of the Ottoman Period. It is possible to list them, respectively, as follows: Science Office which was created for translation activities within the Council of Education established through the Statute on General Education published in 1870, the Copyright and Translation Office, which was established in 1879 during II. Abdulhamid period, Copyright and Translation Office, which was created during the Second Constitutional Period in 1914. Although all these institutions mentioned above have slight differences, they were established in similar ways and engaged in various activities.

During the GNAT (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) governments, translation activities continued to be carried out systematically by the state. In this context, the Copyright and Translation Council and the Copyright and Translation Committees, led by various individuals, served at different times. The Copyright and Translation Committee, which was formed during the GNAT governments in the Republican Period, continued its activities intensively. However, its operation was regulated by the Declaration of the Copyright and Translation Committee published in 1924.

The Translation Office, which is the subject of the study and is thought to be a model for today's understanding of institutionalization with certain features, was established during the İnönü Period. In order to understand how useful the Office can be in being an institutionalization model in translation activities, it should be evaluated in detail by focusing on the concept of institutionalization.

Institutionalization-Focused Examination of Translation Office

In this part of the study, the Translation Office established in the Republican Period will be examined mainly by using the data presented in the book "Translation Institutions in Turkey" written by Taceddin Kayaoğlu (1998). Inferences will be made about the extent to which the Translation Office created by the state carries the conditions of today's institutionalization and in what dimensions it can set an example for an institutional translation model that can be created in the future.

Before mentioning about the functioning of the Translation Office, which can be defined as an institutionalization initiative from today's approach, it would be useful to briefly mention who and how the institution was created. The Translation Office was established in 1940 with the contribution of Hasan Ali Yücel, who served as the Minister of National Education during the İnönü period. However, the First Turkish Publications Congress (1939) convened before the establishment of the bureau should also be emphasized because some of the decisions taken in the congress are directly related to the relevant office. "One of the decisions that emerged is the Translation Affairs Committee, which created the institution that would gain an institutional identity as a Translation Office in the future" (Kayaoğlu, 1998: 103). After the congress, the members of the Translation Committee were determined, and these members carried out some activities. "One of these activities is to establish a permanent Translation Office" (Gürçağlar, 2005: 36).

Established on May 19, 1940, under the Ministry of National Education, the Translation Office carried out the most intensive and productive translation activities among the institutions established to carry out translation studies until then. Many writers and translators worked in the established office, and many foreign works that had an important role in the enlightenment of the West were translated into Turkish. The Office consisted of a group of 180 translators. "When 210 works from French classics, 90 from German literature, 65 works from English literature and translation works in different western languages are included, a total of 604 Western works were translated by the Translation Office" (Aytaç, 1999: 87). Thus, it was aimed to realize the enlightenment seen in the West, even partially, in Turkey.

The aims of the establishment of translation institutions, which had been founded before, were announced through certain declarations. However, a clear statement as much as the explanation for the purpose of the Translation Office has not been found. With this statement, the establishment purpose of the Translation Office became clear as follows: "The Office was established to deal with the translation order of the works in the list, their distribution to the translators, the examination and follow-up of the translations, and the arrangement and supervision of the translation publications of private institutions" (Kayaoglu, 1998: 297).

According to Hasan Ali Yücel, many attempts were made for translation activities until that day, but they acted haphazardly and as a result the desired goals could not be achieved. The Translation Office, on the other hand, took an important step in ending the errors made in the past and standardizing the translation activities. As stated

before, it would not be wrong to say that there was an attempt to standardize, which is one of the most basic indicators of institutionalization. In this respect, it can be an example based on standardization for translation studies.

The Translation Office also acted in accordance with Atatürk's statism policy and regularly translated world classics. Thus, the national library became an institution that contained the major works in the world. It was emphasized that a predetermined policy should be included among the main indicators of institutionalization. The fact that the Office operated through the principle of statism is a feature that can be utilized in creating an institutional model in today's translation activities.

In the administrative framework, there is a committee consisting of a chairman, a chief, a general clerk, and four members. The delegation coordinated the operation of translation activities. They were authorized to decide which translations would be made, by whom these translations would be conducted, how the resulting translation works would be examined, and how the payment would be provided. In this respect, it is observed that there is a standardization path in terms of management. In this regard, the Office also sets an important example for the administrative scheme, which is one of the bare necessities of institutionalization.

One of the most basic principles of institutionalization is the determination of the procedures and conditions under which the relevant activity will be carried out. The Translation Office also had a unique procedure and specification. Some of the works to be translated were carried out by the members of the Translation Office. Other works were made by translators determined by the committee. It was also announced that citizens who had the skills to translate could also be involved in this process. Thus, the committee increased its stakeholders in translation activities by assigning duties and responsibilities to translators other than itself. The translators were asked to translate 25-30 pages of the given work first. This part would provide the delegation with information about the translator's translation skills. In addition, this translation was checked by other experts in the field, and the translator was told to continue with the translation in case of approval. After the whole work was translated, it was checked again, and if it was found appropriate, the fee to be paid to the translator was decided. This procedure indicates that there was an important system in terms of both functioning and supervision. Since institutionalization requires a standardization in every subject, it can be taken as an example for an institutionalization model in translation activities from today's perspective.

The translation office considered the needs of the country in its activities and made its choices about which translation works would be in order to make cultural progress. Due to the cultural and economic superiority of the West in the conditions of that period, the works to be translated were mainly selected from Greek, Latin, and other Western cultures. Such an approach is a clear indication that the Translation Office included cultural elements in its activities. The cultural dimension, which is another pillar of institutionalization, shows itself here and gives clues for a model that can be created within the scope of translation activities in the future.

It is seen that “the translations made under the roof of the translation office were created within the framework of conscious methodological preferences” (Yazar, 2018: 93). The basic principles needed in terms of translation activities were determined beforehand. This is a very important initiative in terms of the approach that can be defined as institutionalization from today's point of view. It is thought that the Translation Office can set an important example for an institutionalization model that can be created in today's conditions in translation activities with the above-mentioned administrative, cultural, economic, and political aspects. However, the sustainability principle, which forms the basis of institutionalization, is unfortunately not available in the Translation Office. It was closed in 1967 as a result of the resignation of its members.

Discussion and Conclusion

When the translation activities carried out in the Ottoman Period and the Republican Period are examined, it is clearly observed that they made a great contribution to the development of the society in both cultural and educational context and to mediate its orientation to the West, which had reached a much more advanced level of civilization under the conditions of that period. In the period after the proclamation of the Republic, intensive and effective translation studies started by Hasan Ali Yücel, the former Minister of National Education, and continued throughout the same period are seen.

The translation activities carried out in the mentioned period differ from similar studies done in previous dates in terms of being done systematically by the state. In other words, the work to be done was planned and put in writing through the declaration. In other words, it was determined which translator would do which work, who would check and correct the final version of the work, how the fee to be paid for the translations would be and

how they would be paid. In other words, the scheme related to the management and operation of the institution was created. It is possible to define this attempt as a standardization that is desired to be created in translation activities. In this respect, it can be an important example for an institutionalization model that can be planned for translation studies today.

When both the definition of institutionalization in TLA and the definitions given in the related studies in the literature are examined, the principle of sustainability lies at the basis of institutionalization. The Translation Office was closed due to the political and economic problems encountered during its operation. In this framework, it will not be able to make a contribution based on the principle of sustainability for an institutional translation model that can be designed in today's conditions. It would not be correct to say that the Translation Office has become fully institutionalized since it cannot fully reflect the institutionalism indicators from today's perspective. But it can be defined as a big step taken in the context of institutionalization in the above-mentioned issues.

The following suggestions can be made for future studies on the subject: In addition to the dimensions in which the Translation Office is successful in terms of institutionalization, a sustainability-based model can be developed. Moreover, parallel to technological development, a model can be developed by defining the dimensions of a digital institutionalization within the scope of translation. In addition, the suitability or adaptability of the model applied in any sector that has undergone digital institutionalization can be discussed within the scope of translation studies.

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