

Preface

I first became interested in Spanish in high school. A trip to Mexico to study for six weeks cemented my love affair with the language, and I continued my studies at Virginia Tech along with the biology degree I was pursuing. During graduate school I became interested in professional translation as a career option, but wanted to know more about the field that had piqued my interest. Thus, my thesis topic was born - a study of translation. I was a bit concerned about computer translation abilities – I wanted to know if human translators would be needed in twenty years. The historical setting grew out of the text for class, Introduction to Spanish Translation by Jack Child, which began each chapter with a “translation history” tidbit. I noticed how historical events had affected translation, and wanted to know more. I also thought that knowing the history of translation and trends in translation and problems would help me see an overall context from which to study machine translation.

I bring several skill sets to this study. The first two – language and history, are not unusual in studying a history of translation. However, my preliminary training in college was as a hard scientist – a biologist, and that training has affected my perception of the world. The title reflects that “evolution” as I tend to see things not as static, since an organism that reaches stasis dies, but as a dynamic, living changing body. The same can be said for studies and profession, and I wanted to know those changes, what occasioned them, as evolution is hindsight. My scientific mind, used to carrying out experiments in a logical fashion and writing reports afterward, also laid out the study in what I believe to be a logical fashion, a chronological history to 1900, then 1900- now, then machine translation, as the latest evolution change at the end. Last, there are several levels of MT; they have been laid out as well, from the simplest CAT systems to the most complex, multilingual MT systems.