

# **Erbil as Translation Zone**

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# Presentation Outline

- **The City as Translation Zone**
- **Elements of a Translational City**
- **Erbil as Translation Zone**
- **Discussion**
- **Conclusion**

# The City as Translation Zone

When we talk about “translation as communication between cultures”, our mind automatically draws a border between two geographical settings with heterogeneous cultural backgrounds across which translation streams. However, in the modern-day, translation can happen among inhabitants of metropolises which are the home of people of a nation as well as enclaves of other nations and cultures. For instance, Erbil is turning to a cosmopolis with polyglot people. There, inhabitants get unavoidably accustomed to translate to communicate with townspeople of other languages and cultures. Cronin and Simon proposed the notion of “translational city”, stating that “translation proposes an active, directional and interactional model of language relations. Translation becomes a key to understanding the cultural life of cities” (2014, p. 119). According to them, in a translational city (e.g., Erbil), there are areas/spaces of intense interaction across languages- e.g., Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, English-, cultural communications, and polymorphous translation practices. Here, elements of the translational city of Erbil are explained and exemplified, and the merits of translation in the city are argued.

# Elements of a Translational City

1. **The Sensory Landscape**
2. **Translation Spaces**
3. **Cultural Mediators**
4. **The Digital City (Cronin and Simon, 2014)**

Here,

- The existence of these elements in Erbil is explained.
- The manifestation of these elements at Cihan University-Erbil is exemplified.
- The merits of translation in the city are also argued.

# Erbil as Translation Zone

1. **The Sensory Landscape:** The streets, vehicles, shops, and buildings of polyglot neighborhoods.

Translation is used when .....

- The city's streets and buildings are named;
- the historical places are called; and
- addresses are given.

## At Cihan University-Erbil:

The names of departments and colleges, centers, modules and majors, employees and faculties, and events and actions are translated from English into vernacular languages (Kurdish and Arabic) and vice versa.



**2. Translation Spaces:** “Social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.

Translation is used by the polyglot people at schools, hospitals, police stations, buses, markets, and banks communicate with each other.



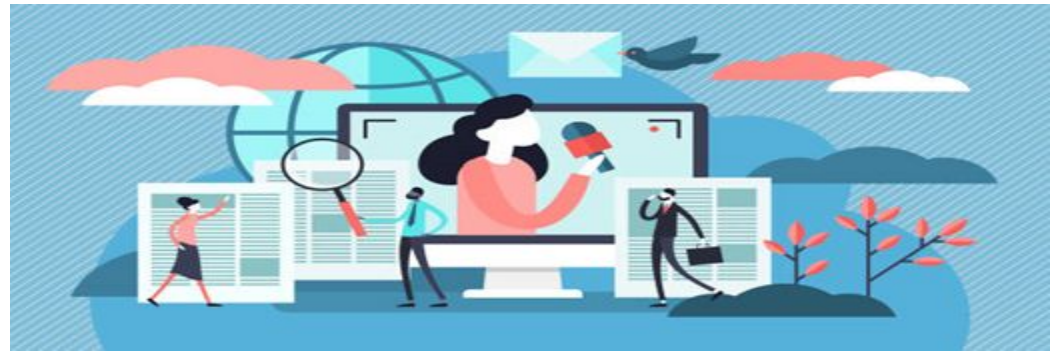
*In our example,*

Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Indian, and Bengali people- teachers, students, employees, and workers- studying or working at the university often use translation from/into their mother tongue for communication with other people inside the campus.



Seminar, Bologna Process at Cihan University-Erbil(2018)

**3. Cultural Mediators:** Publishers, editors, writers, translators, reporters, columnists, teachers, analysts need translation to present information to a multilingual community.



The Cihan university's writers and translators, reporters, and secretaries translate between English, Kurdish, and Arabic.



GE Classroom



Cihan TV Reporters Covering Events



CU Website Translators & Editors

**4. The Digital City:** The virtual skin of digital connectivity which is wrapped around urban spaces (Skype, Viber, Facebook, etc.)

When the city's social media users and members correspond and contact each other on the net, translation is frequently used.



At Cihan University, On Emails, hangout audio-video contacts, the university's website and Facebook account, and E-Library receivers are provided with translations between Kurdish, Arabic, and English.

- Formal correspondence on the university emails- to the teaching staff, HoDs, and students- mostly contain Kurdish/or Arabic texts as well as their translation in English.
- Website news is ideally preferred to be disseminated in Kurdish with Arabic and English translations.
- However, informal writings and messages on Viber, WhatsApp, and Instagram are generally communicated in English.



# Discussion

## Some points opted for discussion:

- ✦ Exemplification of translation in other organizations of the city.
- ✦ The (dis)advantages of translation in civic communication.
- ✦ Changes been brought to the city`s actual and virtual structures, due to Translation application therein.
- ✦ The city without translation!
- ✦ Alternative(s) to translation- e.g., Monolingual or Multilingual communication- as de facto communication strategy between the city`s residents.
- ✦ Similarities/differences between Erbil and other big cities (e.g., Tehran, Baghdad, Istanbul, etc.) with respect to communication among their inhabitants.

# Conclusion

- ✓ Due to the geopolitical condition of Erbil, the city needs to tolerate non-Kurdish communication- including translation and multilingual speech.
- ✓ Translation from/into Kurdish is the main way of communication among the townspeople. Besides, a large number of books and texts are translated into Kurdish from other languages. Translation is the common text product operation in the region.
- ✓ Adoption of translation- instead of Kurdish monolingual communication- in the city, brings about more chances of negotiation and interactions with other colures and nations, and it improves mutual understanding and cooperation with them.
- ✓ Translation feeds the Kurdish language, literature, and culture.
- ✓ Translation is a good strategy for surviving Kurdish being exposed to the torrent of globalization (compare the Kurdish language in Erbil with the Malay language in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore).
- ✓ Last but not least, translation provides more job opportunities for translators in the city's organizations.



**Thank you**