2.4.2. The Decade of High Expectations and Disillusions 1956-1966

It should be highlighted that computers at that time were inadequate for accomplishing the task of MT. Therefore, researchers focused on technical aspects by improving hardware components of the computer while other researchers grouped their efforts in developing suitable language processing tools. Other researchers kept on studying the theoretical issues especially in Europe and the Soviet Union. Most US research was for Russian-English translation due to political and military reasons.

Erwin Reifler (University of Washington) followed the word for word approach by constructing a large bilingual dictionary where it was not only used to look up equivalents, but also for solving grammatical problems without using syntactic analysis. Gilbert King at the IBM Corporation led to more practical outcome in 1958. He developed a system which was installed for the US Air Force which produced translation, usually crude and barely intelligible, for many years until replaced by Systran in 1970.

RAND adopted an empirical approach through the years 1950-1960. It neglected any linguistic theory and emphasized the statistical analysis approach instead. A computer program was written using bilingual glossaries and simple grammar rules. The outcome was looked at by post editors who in return indicated errors. Consequently, the glossaries and the grammar rules were revised, and the text would be translated again until satisfactory results were achieved. It is worth noting that at RAND, David Hays developed the first parser based on dependency grammar.

A similar approach was adopted at Georgetown University which was carried by Leon Dostert. In fact, The Gorgetown group was the largest in the US