

FOUR STAGES OF TRANSLATION THEORY

I consider that there have been four successive stages in translation theory. They are sometimes referred to, in the study of translation, as translational turns or transfers. I classify them as follows:

1. The linguistic stage, up to 1950. It covers mainly literary texts, that is poetry, short stories, plays, novels and autobiography. This stage is mainly concerned with the continually recurring discussion of the merits of word-for-word, as opposed to sense-for-sense, translation. This is the 'pre-linguistics' stage.

2. The communicative stage, from around 1950. This stage covers non-literary and literary texts. It is concerned with the categorization of text registers, the participation of a range of readership groups (less-educated to expert), and the identification of types of procedures for translating various segments of a text. It marks the application of linguistics to translation studies.

3. The functionalist stage, from around 1970. It covers mainly non-literary texts, that is, 'the real world'. It is focussed on the intention of a text and its essential message, rather than the language of the source text. It tends to be seen as a commercial operation, with the author as the vendor, the text and/or the translation as the tender, and the readership as the consumer.

4. The ethical/aesthetic stage, from around 2000. This stage is concerned with authoritative and official or documentary texts, and includes serious literary works. Since the turn of the millennium, I have endeavoured to establish that translation is a noble, truth-seeking profession and that a translation must not mislead readers factually nor deceive them with false ideas; if such occur in the original, they must be corrected or glossed extra-textually, depending as their ethical benchmark on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) plus amendments, and not on the translator's personal ideology; in my view, the UN Declaration is the keystone of social and individual ethics today. So, where prejudiced language is used in the source text, in respect of gender, race, colour, religion, class, age, mental health or physical appearance, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it has generally to be pointed out in a translator's preface or the footnotes, unless the text is historical. The truth is essentially twofold: (a) the correspondence of a factual text with reality; (b) the correspondence of an imaginative text with a meaningful allegory, and, consequentially; (c) the correspondence of the translation with the respective type of text.

These four stages are cumulative, in the sense that they absorb without eliminating each other. The fourth stage is final, but it is dynamic, since the moral truth progresses but the aesthetic truth is permanent – no one will ever excel Shakespeare's language or Hardy's poetry.

Newmark, Peter. "The Linguistic and Communicative Stages in Translation Theory." *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, Edited by Jeremy Munday, Routledge, London, 2009, pp. 20–35.

1. Which stage of translation theory is primarily concerned with the discussion of word-for-word versus sense-for-sense translation?

- A) The linguistic stage
- B) The communicative stage
- C) The functionalist stage
- D) The ethical/aesthetic stage

2. During which stage of translation theory did the application of linguistics to translation studies become prominent?

- A) The linguistic stage
- B) The communicative stage
- C) The functionalist stage
- D) The ethical/aesthetic stage

3. Which stage of translation theory focuses on the intention and essential message of a text rather than the language of the source text?

- A) The linguistic stage
- B) The communicative stage
- C) The functionalist stage
- D) The ethical/aesthetic stage

4. Which stage of translation theory is concerned with authoritative and official or documentary texts?

- A) The linguistic stage
- B) The communicative stage
- C) The functionalist stage
- D) The ethical/aesthetic stage

5. In the ethical/aesthetic stage, how should prejudiced language in the source text be addressed?

- A) It should be completely eliminated from the translation.
- B) It should be highlighted in the footnotes or translator's preface.

C) It should be adapted to fit the translator's personal ideology.

D) It should be faithfully retained in the translation.

Answer 1: A) The linguistic stage

Answer 2: B) The communicative stage

Answer 3: C) The functionalist stage

Answer 4: D) The ethical/aesthetic stage

Answer 5: B) It should be highlighted in the footnotes or translator's preface.