

cultures, Nida achieved what few of his predecessors attempted: he went a long way to producing a systematic analytical procedure for translators working with all kinds of texts and he factored into the translation equation the receivers of the TT and their cultural expectations. Despite the heated debate it has provoked, Nida's systematic linguistic approach to translation exerted considerable influence on many subsequent and prominent translation scholars, among them Peter Newmark in the UK and Werner Koller in Germany.

3.3 Newmark: semantic and communicative translation

Peter Newmark (1916–2011)'s *Approaches to Translation* (1981) and *A Textbook of Translation* (1988) have been widely used on translator training courses and combine a wealth of practical examples of linguistic theories of meaning with practical applications for translation. Yet Newmark departs from Nida's receptor-oriented line. He feels that the success of equivalent effect is 'illusory' and that 'the conflict of loyalties, the gap between emphasis on source and target language, will always remain as the overriding problem in translation theory and practice' (Newmark 1981: 38). Newmark suggests narrowing the gap by replacing the old terms with those of 'semantic' and 'communicative' translation:

Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original.

(Newmark 1981: 39)

This description of **communicative translation** resembles Nida's dynamic equivalence in the effect it is trying to create on the TT reader, while **semantic translation** has similarities to Nida's formal equivalence. However, Newmark distances himself from the full principle of equivalent effect, since that effect 'is inoperant if the text is out of TL space and time' (1981: 69). An example would be a modern British English translation of Homer. No modern translator, irrespective of the TL, can possibly hope or expect to produce the same effect on the reader of the written TT as the oral ST had on its listeners in ancient Greece. Newmark (*ibid.*: 51) also raises further questions concerning the readers to whom Nida directs his dynamic equivalence, asking if they are 'to be handed everything on a plate', with everything explained for them.

Other differences are revealed by Newmark's definitions of his own terms (ibid.: 39–69), summarized in Table 3.2. Newmark (ibid.: 63) indicates that semantic translation differs from literal translation in that it 'respects context', interprets and even explains (metaphors, for instance). On the other hand, as we

Table 3.2 Comparison of Newmark's semantic and communicative translation

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Semantic translation</i>	<i>Communicative translation</i>
Transmitter/ addressee focus	Focus on the thought processes of the transmitter as an individual; should only help TT reader with connotations if they are a crucial part of message	Subjective, TT reader focused, oriented towards a specific language and culture
Culture	Remains within the SL culture	Transfers foreign elements into the TL culture
Time and origin	Not fixed in any time or local space; translation needs to be done anew with every generation	Ephemeral and rooted in its own contemporary context
Relation to ST	Always 'inferior' to ST; 'loss' of meaning	May be 'better' than the ST; 'gain' of force and clarity even if loss of semantic content
Use of form of SL	If ST language norms deviate, then this must be replicated in TT; 'loyalty' to ST author	Respect for the form of the SL, but overriding 'loyalty' to TL norms
Form of TL	More complex, awkward, detailed, concentrated; tendency to overtranslate	Smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional; tendency to undertranslate
Appropriateness	For serious literature, autobiography, 'personal effusion', any important political (or other) statement	For the vast majority of texts, e.g. non-literary writing, technical and informative texts, publicity, standardized types, popular fiction
Criterion for evaluation	Accuracy of reproduction of the significance of ST	Accuracy of communication of ST message in TT

saw in [Chapter 2](#), literal translation means word-for-word in its extreme version and, even in its weaker form, sticks very closely to ST lexis and syntax.

Importantly, as long as equivalent effect is achieved, Newmark holds literal translation to be the best approach:

In communicative as in semantic translation, provided that equivalent effect is secured, the literal word-for-word translation is not only the best, it is the only valid method of translation.

(Newmark 1981: 39)

This assertion can be related to what other theorists (e.g. Levý 1967/2000, Toury 1995/2012) have said about the translator's work. Namely, that the constraints of time and working conditions often mean that the translator has to maximize the efficiency of the cognitive processes (see [Chapter 4](#)) by concentrating energy on especially difficult problems, by devoting less effort to those parts of the text where a reasonable translation is produced by the 'literal' procedure. However, if there is a conflict between the two forms of translation (if semantic translation would result in an 'abnormal' TT or would not secure equivalent effect in the TL) then communicative translation should be preferred. An example of this, provided by Newmark (*ibid.*: 39), is the common sign *bissiger Hund* and *chien méchant*. It would be translated communicatively as *beware of the dog!* in order to communicate the message, not semantically as *dog that bites!* and *bad dog!*

3.4 Exploration: Different terms

Look again at the above descriptions of Nida and Newmark's theories; refer also to the original writings. What are the main features of dynamic/formal equivalence and semantic/communicative translation?

3.3.1 Discussion of Newmark

Newmark's terms semantic translation and communicative translation have generally received far less discussion than Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence. This may be because, despite Newmark's relevant criticisms of equivalent effect, they raise some of the same points concerning the translation process and the importance of the TT reader. One of the difficulties encountered by translation studies

in systematically following up advances in theory may indeed be partly attributable to the overabundance of terminology. Newmark himself, for instance, defines Juliane House's pair of 'overt' and 'covert' translation (see [Chapter 6](#)) in terms of his own semantic and communicative translation (Newmark 1981: 52) and considers communicative translation to be 'identical' to Nida's functional or dynamic equivalence (Newmark 2009: 30).⁶

Newmark has been criticized for his strong prescriptivism, and the language of his evaluations still bears traces of what he himself called the 'pre-linguistics era' of translation studies: translations are 'smooth' or 'awkward', while translation itself is an 'art' (if semantic) or a 'craft' (if communicative). Nonetheless, the large number of examples in Newmark's work provide ample guidance and advice for the trainee, and many of the questions he tackles are of important practical relevance to translation. It should also be noted that in his later discourse (e.g. Pedrola 1999, Newmark 2009: 34), he emphasized the aesthetic principles of writing, the difference between 'social, non-literary' and 'authoritative and serious' translation and an ethical and truth-seeking function for translation.

3.4 Koller: equivalence relations

Nida's move towards a science of translation proved to be especially influential in Germany, where the common term for translation studies is *Übersetzungswissenschaft* ('translation science'). Among the most prominent German scholars in the translation science field during the 1970s and 1980s were Wolfram Wilss, of Saarland University, and, from the then German Democratic Republic, the Leipzig School, including Otto Kade and Albrecht Neubert (Snell-Hornby 2006: 26–9, 2010).⁷

Important work to refine the concept of equivalence was carried out by Werner Koller in Heidelberg (West Germany) and Bergen (Norway). Koller's *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft* ([Research into the science of translation] 1979a; see also Koller 1979b/1989 and 1995) examines the concept of equivalence more closely along with its linked term 'correspondence' (Koller 1979a: 176–91). The two can be differentiated as follows:

- (1) **Correspondence** falls within the field of contrastive linguistics, which compares two language systems and describes differences and similarities contrastively. Its parameters are those of Saussure's *langue* (Saussure 1916/1983). This would include the identification of false friends (e.g.