

AET-129 – Week 13: Translation and Ideology

Translation and Ideology - How Beliefs, Values, and Power Shape Translation

What Is Ideology?

Ideology is a system of beliefs and values.

It includes:

- Ideas about right and wrong
- Ideas about family, authority, and religion
- Ideas about children, women, and men
- Ideas about what should be shown and what should be hidden

Key points:

Every society has ideology.

Every text is written inside an ideology.

Important Truth for Translators

Translation is NOT just changing words from English to Turkish.

Translation IS making choices inside a culture.

Because:

- Words carry values.
- Sentences carry attitudes.
- Stories carry messages.

When you translate, you transfer values, not just language.

Where Does Ideology Appear in Translation?

Ideology can affect:

- Word choice
- Sentence structure
- Tone (soft, strict, or moralizing)
- What is kept, changed, or removed

Sometimes ideology is very obvious; sometimes it is hidden.

The translator's job is to notice it.

The Translator Is Not Invisible

According to Munday:

- Translators are real people living in a society.
- They have beliefs and values.
- They work for publishers, schools, and institutions.

Therefore, translators:

- Make decisions
- Accept or resist norms
- Shape how readers understand texts

Translators are active agents, not machines.

Why Ideology Is Strong in Some Texts

Ideology is stronger in texts that are:

- For children
- Educational
- Religious
- Political
- Canonical (classics)

Why Children's Literature Is Special

Children's books are written for children but controlled by adults.

Adults decide:

- What children should learn
- What is good or bad
- What is appropriate

For this reason, ideology is very strong in children's literature.

Typical Ideological Changes in Children's Books

In translation, we often see:

- Violence softened or removed
- Death avoided or explained gently
- Disobedience criticized

- Fear reduced
- Authority respected

These are ideological decisions, not language problems.

Example from Children's Literature

Source text (English):

“The boy disobeyed his parents and ran into the forest.”

Neutral translation:

“Çocuk anne babasına karşı geldi ve ormana koştu.”

This version keeps the meaning and is closer to the source ideology.

Ideological translation:

“Çocuk ailesinin sözünü dinlemeyerek ormana doğru uzaklaştı.”

This version adds a moral lesson and emphasizes obedience.

The difference reflects cultural values about authority.

Discussion Questions (Children's Literature)

- Which version sounds more moral?
- Which version teaches a lesson?
- Which version reflects Turkish family values more?
- Did the translator add ideology?

What Are Classics?

Classics are old, important literary works read across generations.

Examples include Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Shakespeare, Dante, and Cervantes.

Classics are retranslated because society and values change over time.

Example from Classic Literature

Source text (English):

“She was expected to obey without question.”

Literal translation:

“Sorgusuz sualsiz itaat etmesi bekleniyordu.”

This version sounds strong and harsh to modern readers.

Ideologically adapted translation:

“Toplum ondan sessizce uyum sağlamaşını bekliyordu.”

This version softens power and reflects modern values.

Children’s Literature vs. Classics

Children’s literature:

- Ideology is very visible
- Translator freedom is limited
- Purpose is moral education
- Changes are strong

Classics:

- Ideology is more hidden
- Translator freedom is greater
- Purpose is cultural reinterpretation
- Changes are subtle

The Translator’s Ethical Question

Translators should ask:

- Should I protect the reader?
- Should I keep the original ideology?
- Is changing ideology wrong or necessary?

According to Munday, the key is awareness and responsibility.

Key Takeaways

- Translation is not neutral.
- Translators always make choices.

- Ideology exists in words, tone, and omissions.
- Children's literature shows ideology clearly.
- Classics show ideology across time.

Final Message

When you translate, you are not only choosing words.

You are choosing values.

That is why translation matters.

Class Activity

Work in pairs or groups:

- Choose one translated passage.
- Identify the hidden ideology.
- Decide who made this choice and why.
- Discuss how you would translate it differently.

Real-World Examples to Remember

- Harry Potter: Americanization vs. British English
- Pinocchio: Violence softened in English translations
- Snow White: Victorian morality added
- Anne Frank's Diary: Post-war softening of statements
- Dante's Divine Comedy: Religious censorship in some translations