

new approach to legal translation hardcover 1997 author susan sarcevic

A New Approach to Legal Translation: Revisiting Susan Sarcevic's 1997 Classic

Are you a legal professional, translator, or interpreter struggling with the nuances of legal terminology and cross-cultural communication? Do you remember the groundbreaking work of Susan Sarcevic and her impact on the field? This post delves into Susan Sarcevic's seminal work, "A New Approach to Legal Translation" (hardcover, 1997), examining its enduring relevance in today's interconnected world. We'll explore its key concepts, assess its continued impact, and discuss why this book remains a valuable resource for anyone navigating the complexities of legal translation. Prepare to revisit a classic that continues to shape the landscape of legal translation.

Understanding the Context: Legal Translation Before Sarcevic

Before diving into Sarcevic's "New Approach," it's crucial to understand the state of legal translation in the pre-internet era. Legal translation wasn't the streamlined, technologically-assisted process it is today. The approaches were often less systematic, relying heavily on direct translation and lacking the nuanced understanding of both legal systems and cultural contexts that Sarcevic championed. Many translations were prone to inaccuracies and inconsistencies, potentially leading to misinterpretations with significant legal ramifications. This lack of standardization highlighted a critical need for a more sophisticated and theoretically grounded approach.

Sarcevic's Revolutionary Ideas: A Paradigm Shift

Sarcevic's 1997 book didn't just offer a new method; it offered a new paradigm. Her work challenged conventional wisdom, advocating for a move away from purely linguistic approaches towards a deeper understanding of the socio-legal context. Key concepts introduced in "A New Approach to Legal Translation" included:

The Importance of Legal Systems Comparison: Sarcevic emphasized the necessity of thoroughly understanding the legal systems involved (source and target). A direct word-for-word translation often fails to capture the underlying legal concepts and their implications, leading to potentially disastrous misinterpretations. Her work underscored the need for comparative legal studies as a foundation for effective legal translation.

The Role of Context and Culture: She stressed the significant impact of culture on legal interpretation. Legal systems are deeply embedded within their cultural contexts, and neglecting this can lead to translations that are technically accurate but legally meaningless or even misleading in the target jurisdiction.

Beyond Lexical Equivalence: Sarcevic moved beyond the simple search for lexical equivalents (direct word-for-word translations). She advocated for a functional approach, prioritizing the accurate conveyance of the legal meaning and intent over literal translations. This involves a deep understanding of the legal function of the source text within its system and finding the appropriate functional equivalent in the target legal system.

The Translator as a Legal Expert (to an extent): While not suggesting translators replace lawyers, Sarcevic stressed the importance of translators possessing a solid understanding of legal concepts and procedures. This understanding enables translators to make informed decisions about linguistic choices and ensure the accuracy and efficacy of their translations.

The Enduring Legacy of "A New Approach to Legal Translation"

Sarcevic's contributions continue to resonate today. Her work laid the groundwork for many of the current best practices in legal translation. Her emphasis on legal system comparison, cultural awareness, and a functional approach remains central to legal translation training and professional standards. Her book has significantly influenced the development of specialized translation methodologies within the field, ensuring higher levels of accuracy and reliability in legal documents. Furthermore, her work directly contributed to the development of improved quality control measures and ethical guidelines within the profession.

Accessing and Utilizing Sarcevic's Work Today

While finding a physical copy of the 1997 hardcover edition of "A New Approach to Legal Translation" might prove challenging, the book's influence persists. Its core concepts are integrated into numerous contemporary legal translation textbooks and resources. Searching for articles and scholarly works citing Sarcevic will lead you to a wealth of information expanding upon her ideas and applying them to modern legal contexts. Engaging with this secondary literature allows you to grasp the ongoing evolution of the field, built on the solid foundation Sarcevic established.

Conclusion

Susan Sarcevic's "A New Approach to Legal Translation" (1997) remains a landmark publication, its influence evident in the evolution of legal translation practices. Its enduring relevance stems from its pioneering

emphasis on legal system comparison, cultural sensitivity, and a functional approach that prioritizes accurate conveyance of legal meaning and intent over literal translation. While the book itself might be difficult to locate, its core principles continue to shape the field, providing invaluable guidance for professionals navigating the intricate world of legal translation.

FAQs

1. Is "A New Approach to Legal Translation" still relevant today?
Absolutely. Its core principles concerning legal system comparison, cultural sensitivity, and functional equivalence remain highly relevant and form the basis of many modern legal translation practices.
1. Where can I find information based on Sarcevic's work? While the 1997 hardcover edition may be hard to find, numerous academic articles and contemporary legal translation textbooks build upon and reference her work. Searching for articles citing Susan Sarcevic will yield many relevant results.
1. What makes Sarcevic's approach "new"? At the time of publication, the field often relied on direct translation without sufficient consideration for the significant differences between legal systems and cultures. Sarcevic's approach emphasized a more systematic and contextually aware approach.
1. Is this book suitable for beginners in legal translation? While not explicitly a beginner's textbook, understanding the core principles outlined in Sarcevic's work is beneficial for anyone entering the field of legal translation, providing a strong theoretical foundation.
1. How can I apply Sarcevic's principles to my work? Before translating any legal document, always thoroughly research the legal systems involved and consider the cultural context. Prioritize conveying the legal meaning and function accurately over literal translation. If unsure, consult with a legal professional.

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