

EQUIVALENCE AND EQUIVALENT EFFECTS IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

This work is supposed to study and analyse different theories of the equivalence in the process of translation, its effect and review the theory of equivalence elaborated by some of the most innovative theorists in the past years of this century. It is concentrated on comparing different models, such as; Vinay and Darbelnet, Jacobson, Nida, Kollar, House, Baker etc. These theorists have studied equivalence in relation to the translation process, using different approaches, and have provided fruitful ideas for further study on this topic. Their theories are analysed in chronological order and divided into linguistic approach, pragmatic/semantic functionally oriented approach. There are also discussed some problems of equivalence, because the target text can never be equivalent to the source text at all levels, researchers have distinguished different types of equivalence so, I will try to elaborate and discuss the differences between them.

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1. Equivalence in translation and its meaning

The comparison of texts in different languages inevitably involves a theory of translation. Equivalence is the central issue in translation and it has been elaborated in different ways by many theorists who have studied equivalence in translation process, using different approaches providing different ideas.

When a message is transferred from one language into another SL (source Language) to TL (Target Language), the translator deals with two different cultures at the same time so transferring a message from SC to TC.. Equivalence is considered to be used. "for the sake of convenience – because most translators are used to it, rather than it has any theoretical status"

The principle that a translation should have an equivalence relation with the source language text is problematic. There are three main reasons why an exact equivalence or effect is difficult to achieve. Firstly, it is impossible for a text to have constant interpretations even for the same person on two occasions (Hervey, Higgins, and Haywood)

According to these three scholars before one could objectively assess textual effects, one would need to have recourse to a fairly detailed and exact theory of psychological effect, a theory capable, among other things, of giving an account of the aesthetic sensations that are often paramount in response to a text.

Secondly translation is a matter of subjective interpretation translators of the source language text. Thus, producing an objective effect on the target text readers, which is the same as that on the source text readers is an unrealistic expectation. Thirdly, it may not be possible for translators to determine how audiences responded to the source text when it was first produced.

If an original was written centuries ago and the language of that original is difficult to comprehend for modern readers, then a simplified translation may well have greater impact on its readers than the original had on the readers in the source culture. No translator would hinder the reader's comprehension by using absolute expressions in order to achieve equivalent effect.

2. Strategies to solve problems of equivalence.

The equivalence problem emerges due to semantic, socio-cultural and grammatical differences between the source language and the target language. These three areas of equivalence problems are intertwined with one another. The meaning(s) that a word refers to are culturally bound, and in most cases the meaning(s) of a word can only be understood through its context of use.

Due to semantic, socio-cultural and grammatical differences between the source language and the target language, loss and additional information in translation can not be avoided.

The Russian born American structuralist Roman Jakobson in his paper "**On Linguistic aspects of translation**" describes three kinds of equivalence; Intralingual translation; Interlingual translation and Intersemiotic translation.

- . The English **-Cheese** is the acoustic signifier which "**denotes**" the concept "of **food made by pressed curds**", (the signified) although there is no inherent reason for that to be so.

It is possible to understand what is signified by a word even if we have never seen or experienced the concept or thing in real life.

Jakobson then moves on to consider the problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages. He points out that "**there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units**"

- **Cheese** in English is not identical to the Russian "**syr**" since the Russian code-unit does not include the concept of "**cottage cheese**". That would be "**tvardi**" not "**syr**" in Russian. In Jakobson's description, interlingual translation involves substituting messages in language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language. The translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus translation according to Roman Jakobson involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.

For the message to be equivalent in ST to TT the code-units will be different since they belong to two different sign systems- languages. From a linguistic and semiotic angle, Jakobson approaches the problem of equivalence with the following, now famous definition;

“ equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics;

The problem of meaning and equivalence focuses on differences in the structure and terminology of languages rather than an any inability of one language to render a message that has been written in another verbal language.

Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey.

There are some grammatical features that should be considered while translating;

The level of gender; house –feminine in romance language, neuter in german and english language;

- **honey** –masculine in french ,German and Italian,frminine I Spanish neuter in English.

The level of aspect- in Russian the verb morphology varies according to whether the action has been completed or not Eugen Nida’s theory of translation developed from his own practical work from the 1940’s onward when he was translating and organizing the translation of the Bible.. His theory took concrete form in two major works in 1960’s; “Towards a science of translating” and the co—authored “ the theory and practice of translating”.

Nida attempts to move translation (Bible in his case) into more scientific era by incorporating recent work in linguistics.

Nida argued that there are two different types of equivalence , namely formal equivalence –which is refered to as formal correspondence – and dynamic equivalence.

- **Formal correspondence** focuses attention on the message itself ,in both form and content. It consists of a TL item which is represents the closest wquivalent of a SL word or phrase.Nida and Taber make it clear that there are not always formal equivalence between language pairs.They therefore suggest that these formal equivalence should be used wherever possible if the translation aims at achieving formal rather than dynamic equivalence. The use of formal equivalents might at times be have serious implications in the TT since the translation will not be easily understood by the target audience.

Nida nad Taber themselves assert that “Typically, formal correspondence distorts tha grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message ,so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard”

- **Dynamic equivalence** is based upon “the principles of the equivalent effect.It si defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same impact on th TC audience as the original wording did upon the ST audience. They argue that “ Frequently , the form of the original text is changed ; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformationin the source language,of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithfull.

As we can see Nida is in favor of the application of dynamic equivalence, because if we take into account the context of the situation in which Nida was dealing with the

translation phenomenon, his translation of Bible. Thus the product of the translation process, that is the text in the TL, must have the same impact on the different readers it was addressing. Only in Nida and Tybirk's edition is it clearly stated that dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information.

Nida describes various scientific approaches to meaning. Central to Nida's work is the move away from the old idea that an orthographic word has a fixed meaning and towards a functional definition of meaning in which a word "acquires" meaning through its context and can produce varying responses according to culture.

Meaning is broken down into Linguistic meaning, referential meaning and emotive meaning. A series of techniques adapted from work in linguistics is presented as an aid for the translator in determining the meaning of different linguistic items. Techniques to determine referential and emotive meaning focus on analyzing the structure of words and differentiating similar words in related lexical fields.

-hierarchical structuring, which differentiates series of words according to their level; e.g. superordinate animal and its hyponyms goat, dog, cow etc and

-techniques of componential analysis – seeks to identify and discriminate specific features of a range of related words – grandmother, mother, cousin.

Another technique is semantic structure analysis in which Nida separates out visually the different meanings of spirit – demons, angels, gods, etc. – according to their characteristics – human vs non-human, good vs bad etc. The central idea of this analysis is to encourage the trainee translator to realize that the sense of a complex semantic term such as; "spirit" varies. It does not always have a religious significance.

Above all Nida stresses the importance of context for communication when dealing with metaphorical meaning and with complex cultural idioms. For Nida the success of the translation depends above all on achieving response. It is one of the four basic requirements of a translation, which are;

1. **making sense**
2. **conveying the spirit and the manner of the original**
3. **having a natural and easy form of expression**
4. **producing a similar response.**

Vinay and Darbelnet view equivalence as a procedure which replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording. According to them, equivalence is the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs, idioms, clichés etc.

V&D claim that in interlingual translation no full equivalence can be reached between code units. They say that "the need for creating equivalences arises from the situation, and it is the situation of the SL that translators have to look for a solution.

Indeed they argue that even if the semantic equivalent of an expression in the SL text is quoted in a dictionary or a glossary, it is not enough, and it does not

guarantee a successful translation . They provide a number of examples to prove their theory , and the following expression appears in their list;

take one – is a fix expression which would have as an equivalent in French translation- **Prenez-en un**.

Newmark's "Approaches to translation " and "A textbook of translation " 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, feeling 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 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, The communicative translation resembles Nida's dybanic equivalence in the effect it is trying to create on the TT reader.

- **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. Semantic translation has similarities to Nida's formal equivalence.

However Newmark distances himself from the full principles of equivalence effect , since that effect is inoperant if the text is out of TL space and time. The example would be a modern British English translation of Homer. The translator can not possibly hope or expect to produce the same effect on the TT reader as the ST had on listeners in ancient Greece..

Newmark indicates that semantic translation differs from literal translation in that it " respects context", interpretes and even explains – e.g. metaphors. 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 .

Thus, the term correspondence falls within the field of contrastive linguistics. Which compares two language systems and describes contrastively differences and similarities. Equivalence on the other hand, relates to equivalent, items in specific ST-TT pairs and context. Kollar describes five different types of equivalence:

- Denotative equivalence- is related to extralinguistic content of a text.
- Connotative equivalence -is related to the lexical choices, especially between near synonyms
- Text normative equivalence –is related to text types, with different types of text behaving in different ways.
- Pragmatic equivalence- or communicative equivalence-is oriented towards the receiver of the text or message.
- Formal equivalence- which is related form and aesthetics of the text , includes word place and the individual stylistic features of the ST.

Conclussion

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The success of the translation depends above all on achieving response.

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