

THE PROBLEM OF EQUIVALENCE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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The problem of equivalence in literary translation is a complex issue that addresses the challenges of conveying meaning, style, and cultural nuances from one language to another. This abstract explores the various theories of equivalence, including formal, dynamic, and functional equivalence, highlighting their implications for translators. It examines how different approaches impact the preservation of the original text's tone, emotional resonance, and aesthetic qualities. The study also considers the role of cultural context and reader response, emphasizing that achieving equivalence is not merely a linguistic task but a nuanced interpretive process. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the importance of balancing fidelity to the source material with the necessity of accessibility for target audiences, suggesting that successful literary translation requires both skill and sensitivity to the intricacies of language and culture.

Key words: equivalence, dynamic equivalence literary translation, cultural context.

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Literary translation is the process of translating written works of literature—such as novels, poems, plays, and essays—from one language to another. It goes beyond mere word-for-word translation; it involves conveying the original author's style, tone, cultural context, and emotional depth. Literary translators must capture the essence of the text, including its aesthetic qualities and nuances, while making it accessible and engaging for the target audience. This type of translation often requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as familiarity with literary traditions and conventions. The goal is to create a text that resonates with readers in the target language while remaining true to the original work's intent and spirit. Equivalence in literary translation is a nuanced concept that refers to how effectively a translated text mirrors the meaning, style, and emotional impact of the original work. Unlike technical translations, where precision is paramount, literary translation grapples with artistic elements, making equivalence more subjective.

One aspect of equivalence is “formal equivalence”, which focuses on preserving the exact wording and structure of the original text. This can be crucial for poetry, where meter and rhyme play significant roles. However, it can lead to awkward or unnatural phrasing in the target language. “Dynamic equivalence” shifts the focus to conveying the same overall effect or emotional response in the reader, even if it means altering the structure or specific wording. This approach can help capture the essence of the work, but it risks losing some of the original's subtlety. Cultural context also plays a significant role in equivalence. Certain expressions, idioms, or cultural references may not have direct counterparts in another language, requiring the translator to find creative solutions that maintain the text's spirit without straying too far from its original meaning. Ultimately, achieving equivalence in literary translation is about balancing fidelity to the source material with the need to create a text that resonates with readers in the target language. This process often involves deep interpretative skills, allowing translators to navigate the complexities of language, culture,

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and artistic expression. The problem of equivalence in literary translation centers on the challenges of conveying not just the literal meaning of a text but also its stylistic and emotional nuances. Translators often face the dilemma of how to balance fidelity to the original work with the need to create a natural and engaging text for the target audience. One major issue is that languages often express concepts and emotions differently. A phrase that carries deep cultural significance in one language may be difficult to translate directly, leading to a loss of meaning or resonance. For example, idiomatic expressions or cultural references may require adaptation, which can shift the tone or impact of the original.

The problems of equivalence in literary translation arise from several key challenges:

Cultural Context. Different cultures have unique references, idioms, and traditions that may not have direct equivalents in another language. Translators must decide whether to preserve the original context or adapt it for clarity.

Stylistic Differences. Literary works often employ specific styles, tones, and narrative techniques. Capturing these elements while translating can be difficult, as what works in one language may feel awkward or lose its impact in another.

Emotional Nuances. Words often carry different emotional weights depending on the cultural and linguistic background. Translating a phrase that evokes strong feelings in one language may not elicit the same response in another, leading to a disconnect.

Idiomatic Expressions. Idioms and colloquial language can be particularly challenging, as they often don't translate directly. Finding an equivalent expression that conveys the same meaning and emotional resonance is a significant hurdle.

Ambiguity and Multiple Meanings. Many literary texts are rich with layers of meaning and ambiguity. Translators face the challenge of conveying these subtleties without losing the original intent or introducing unintended interpretations.

Form and Structure. In poetry and other forms where structure is key (like meter or rhyme), maintaining the original form can be nearly impossible. This can affect the rhythm and musicality of the text.

Reader Response. What resonates with readers in one culture might not resonate in another. Translators must consider how the target audience will perceive the text and adapt accordingly, which can lead to shifts in meaning.

Subjectivity of Translation. Different translators may interpret the same text in varying ways based on their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This subjectivity can lead to multiple valid translations of the same work, each with its own interpretation of equivalence.

These problems highlight the complexities of literary translation, demonstrating that it is as much an art as it is a linguistic process.

Moreover, the artistic qualities of literary texts—such as rhythm, sound, and imagery—are challenging to replicate in another language. A poem's structure or a novel's narrative style might not translate effectively, causing a disconnect between the original and translated versions. Translators also grapple with the notion of reader response. What resonates with readers in one culture might not evoke the same feelings in another. This raises questions about whose voice is being preserved: that of the original author or the target audience.

Ultimately, the problem of equivalence highlights the intricacies of language and culture in literary translation, emphasizing that successful translation is as much an art as it is a science. Translators must navigate these complexities to create works that honor the original while still feeling authentic to new readers. The conclusion regarding the problem of equivalence in literary translation underscores the inherent complexities and artistic challenges faced by translators. It emphasizes that achieving true equivalence is often elusive, as language and culture are deeply intertwined, and what resonates in one context may fall flat in another. Moreover, the conclusion highlights the importance of recognizing translation as an interpretative act rather than a mechanical process. Translators play a crucial

role as cultural mediators, and their choices can significantly impact how a work is perceived in a new language. The problem of equivalence invites ongoing dialogue about the nature of translation itself, prompting both scholars and practitioners to explore the rich interplay between language, culture, and literary expression. It suggests that rather than seeking perfect equivalence, the goal should be to create a translation that captures the essence and spirit of the original, allowing it to resonate with new readers in meaningful ways.

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