

THE PROBLEM OF EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract:

In any account of interlingual communication, translation is used as a generic term. Professionally, however, the term translation is confined to the written, and the term interpretation to the spoken. If confined to a written language, translation is a cover term with three distinguishable meanings: 1) translating, the process (to translate; the activity rather than the tangible object), 2) a translation: the product of the process of translating (e.g. the translated text), and 3) translation: the abstract concept which encompasses both the process of translating and the product of that process Bell. The term 'translation' used and discussed throughout this paper is confined to the written language, and refers to both the product and process of translating.

Key words: translation, denotative equivalence, connotative equivalence, pragmatic, dynamic, target.

The definitions of translation suggested above imply that producing the same meaning or message in the target language text as intended by the original author is the main objective of a translator. This notion of 'sameness' is often understood as an equivalence relation between the source and target texts. This equivalence relation is generally considered the most salient feature of a quality translation.

Problems of Equivalence

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. According to these translation 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 of 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. Miao gives a specific example of the impossibility of the equivalence relation:

If an original was written centuries ago and the language of the 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.

Because the target text can never be equivalent to the source text at all levels, researchers have distinguished different types of equivalence. Nida suggests formal and dynamic or functional equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. It requires that the message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language. Dynamic equivalence is based on the principle of equivalent effect, where the relationship between the receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message. Newmark makes a distinction between communicative and semantic translation. Like Nida's dynamic equivalence, communicative translation also tries to create the effect on the target text reader which is the same as that received by readers of the source language text. Koller proposes denotative, connotative, pragmatic, textual, formal and aesthetic equivalence. Munday describes these five different types of equivalence as follows:

1. Denotative equivalence is related to equivalence of the extralinguistic content of a text.
2. Connotative equivalence is related to the lexical choices, especially between near-synonyms.
3. Text-normative equivalence is related to text types, with texts behaving in different ways.
4. Pragmatic equivalence, or 'communicative equivalence', is oriented towards the receiver of the text or message.

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5. Formal equivalence is related to the form and aesthetics of the text, includes word plays and the individual stylistic features of the source text.

Strategies to solve problems of equivalence

As has been mentioned above, problems of equivalence occur at various levels, ranging from word to textual level. The equivalence problems emerge 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, grammatical differences between the source language and the target language, loss and addition of information in translation cannot be avoided. Basnett-McGuire states that once the principle is accepted that sameness cannot exist between the two languages, it is possible to approach the question of loss and gain in the translation process. Bell suggests a similar point that 'something' is always lost or, one might suggest, gained in the process, and according to Nida, "all types of translation involve 1) loss of information, 2) addition of information, and /or 3) skewing of information". To conform to the stylistic demands and grammatical conventions of the target language, structural adjustment in translation is inevitably needed. These possibilities are expanded below.

Addition of information

Information which is not present in the source language text may be added to the target language text. According to Newmark, information added to the translation is normally cultural (accounting for the differences between SL and TL culture), technical (relating to the topic), or linguistic (explaining wayward use of words). The additional information may be put in the text (i.e. by putting it in brackets) or out of the text (i.e. by using a footnote or annotation). Such additional information is regarded as an extra explanation of culture-specific concepts and is obligatory specification for comprehension purposes. As an example we can see this addition in Uzbek translation ('Futbol koptogini o'ynar bolakay') of 'A Boy Juggling a Soccer Ball' by Christopher Merrill:

mashqlar hadisin olgach, avval o'ng
mo'ngra chap oyoqqa, old-orqa yurib,
yana o'ng oyoqqa, keyin – chapiga,
so'ngra songa olib, son atrofida
to'pni aylantirar chambarak qilib,
oyoq orasiga tushadi koptok

To conclude translatability of poetry, considering one more peculiarity of verse translation, it can be translated according to the research, because if it is not translatable, poets have not been translating those great works into their native languages. In other words each nationality has its own philosophy, and it's natural that it has also untranslatable issues such as cultural.

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