Teoretical Discutions About Equivalence In Translations

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Abstract

The term equivalence is quite controversial in the translation studies. Its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy and many different analyzes of the concept of equivalence. Till today equivalence has been studied in relation with the translation process by using different approaches, as results have been provided ideas for further studies on this topic. Despite the fact that this notion is quite debatable, because of the evident discrepancies in the views of various theorists, however, this term continuously is being used as most suitable in the most literature.

Introduction

The most important thing in transmitting the messages from the source language to the target language is achieving equivalence in translation. It is said that if a linguistic unit in one language has the same intended meaning or message encoded in another language, then these two units are considered to be equivalent. The domain of equivalents covers linguistic units such as morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, idioms, proverbs… The concepts "equivalence", "equivalent to", "the equivalent" themselves appear in definitions and descriptions of the translation process, particularly in studies with a linguistic or communication approach. Examples are: *equivalent elements*, *equivalent textual material*, *as equivalent as possible*, *the closest natural equivalent*, *a maximally equivalent*

target language text, communicatively equivalent etc. Such definitions reveal quite different concepts of equivalence.

Theoretical discussions about equivalence in translation

Equivalence is central issue in translation theory. Its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy and many different theories of the concept of equivalence. The determination of the term equivalence becomes even more confusing when one looks at the various categories of equivalence that have been proposed in the translation theory: content equivalence, stylistic equivalence, formal equivalence, functional equivalence, textual equivalence, communicative equivalence, pragmatic equivalence… As some of the most innovative theorists in this field can be mentioned Jakobson, Koller, Nida, Catford, House, Baker and so on. These theorists have studied equivalence in relation to the translation process, using different approaches, and have provided ideas for further study on this topic. Their theories can be divided into some groups. The first one is in favour of the linguistic approach (negative side of this theory is that translation itself is not just a matter of linguistics, but also of two different cultures at the same time). This particular aspect seems to have been taken into consideration by the second group of theorists who regard translation equivalence as a transfer of the message from the source language to the language of translation. They are primarily pragmatic or functionally oriented towards translation. Finally, there are other translation theorists who seem to stand in the middle. They claim that equivalence is used for the sake of convenience (Leonardi 2010[9]).

Roman Jakobson (1959:233) as one of the most prestigious representatives of structural linguistics ensures that the "equivalence in difference" is major language problem. Jakobson claims that, in the case of interlingual translation[10], the translator uses synonyms in order to get the real

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[9] Leonardi, Vanessa: Equivalence in Translation: Between Myth and Reality. In
http://translationjournal.net/journal/14equiv.htm, 28.09.2011
[10] On the basis of his semiotic approach Jacobson (1959: 232) suggests three kinds of translation: intralingual (within one language, i.e. rewording or paraphrase), interlingual (between two languages), intersemiotic (between sign systems).

message. This means that in interlingual translations does not exist full equivalence between code units. So, according to his theory a translation is possible when two equivalent messages are given in two different codes. Jakobson claims that from a grammatical point of view languages may differ from one another to a greater or lesser degree, but this does not mean that a translation cannot be possible, because the translator may not find a translation equivalent. Jakobson provides a number of examples by comparing English and Russian language structures and explains that in cases when there is no a literal equivalent for a particular word or sentence from the first language, the translator is the one who can choose the most suitable way to transfer the message in the other language. With other words, Jakobson's theory is essentially based on his semiotic approach to translation according to which the translator has to recode the message first and then to transmit it into an equivalent message in the other language.

In the comparative linguistics the term equivalence is taken from the technical disciplines with the thought that all languages have symmetrical relations between elements and that between languages elements could be exchanged with a simple system of rules. Later came out that there are no pairs of languages containing perfectly symmetrical lexical and grammatical structures and that the reversibility as the most important feature of equivalence is not plausible in translation as in the exact sciences. Snell-Hornby (1997:13) even thinks that the term equivalence is not appropriate as a measure for assessing the target text because it is borrowed from the exact sciences and is too static and one-dimensional, and in languages there is no symmetry. So as more appropriate is introduced the term "functional equivalence". Functional equivalence is bound with the model of Nida, according to whom the most important thing is to achieve equivalence of the message hidden in the deep structure (meaning) of the original, regardless of how much change will have to be made in the surface structure of the language (Mihajlovski 2006: 38).

The most important representatives of the Leipzig School (Kade, Jäger and Neubert) in the definition of equivalence are concentrated on the linguistic system, where one can check the non-linguistic reality as tertium comparationis (Prunč

2003:56). Within the functional oriented theory, Reiß / Vermeer (1991:124) consider the equivalence comparing with adequacy. While equivalence is considered as equal value (Reiß 1971:12), adequacy is defined as a relation of appropriateness between linguistic means of expression on one hand and the terms and objectives of the speaker on the other hand through interlingua comparative observation (Albrecht 2005:34).

The notion of equivalence suggests that information with equal values between two languages establish relations conditioned by appointment data for the reference frames. Koller (2001:216) distinguishes five reference frames that play a role in determining the type of equivalence in translation theory, i.e. five factors that can play a relevant role in the specification of equivalence types:

1. The *extra linguistic content* transmitted by a text; the kind of equivalence oriented towards this factor is called *denotative equivalence*.

2. The *connotations* transmitted by means of the word choice (especially where there is a specific choice between synonymous expressions), with respect to level of style (register), the social and geographical dimension, frequency, etc; this is *connotative equivalence.*

3. The *text and language norms* (usage norms) for given text types: this kind of equivalence, having to do with text-type specific features is called *text normative equivalence*.

4. The *receiver* (reader) to whom the translation is directed (who is supposed to be able to understand the text), and to whom the translation is "tuned" in order e.g. to achieve a given effect; this is *pragmatic equivalence*.

5. Certain *formal-aesthetic features* of the source language text, including word play, metalinguistic aspects, individual stylistic features; the kind of equivalence that relates to these textual characteristics is called *formal equivalence,* although this is admittedly a heterogeneous concept.

Conclusion

In trying to define equivalence we come to the conclusion that this notion is quite debatable, because existence is evident discrepancies in the views of various theorists, however, this term continues to be used as suitable. By making an attempt to specify the concept of equivalence more precisely, bearing in mind the various categories, we can conclude that the concept of equivalence postulates a relation between the source language text (or text element) and the target language text (or text element). The kind of equivalence relation is defined in terms of the frame and the conditions to which one refers when using the concept of equivalence. In other words, a normative statement is made: equivalence between a given source text and a given target text exists if the target text fulfils certain requirements with respect to these frame conditions. The relevant conditions are those having to do with such aspects as content, style, function, etc. The requirement of equivalence thus has the following form: the quality in the source language text must be preserved. This means that the content, form, style, function, etc. of the source text must be preserved, or at least that the translation must seek to preserve them as far as possible.

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