

## EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

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**Abstract:** Every translation can be regarded as belonging to a certain type of equivalence. Since each subsequent type implies a higher degree of semantic similarity we can say that every translation is made at a certain level of equivalence.

Translation equivalence is the key idea of translation. According to A.S.Hornby equivalent means equal in value, amount, volume, etc. The principle of equivalence is based on the mathematical law of transitivity. As applied to translation, equivalence means that if a word or word combination of one language (A) corresponds to certain concept (C) and a word or word combination of another language (B) corresponds to the same concept (C) these words or word combinations are considered equivalent (connected by the equivalence relation).

In other words, in translation equivalent means indirectly equal, that is equal by the similarity of meanings. For example, words table and стіл are equivalent through the similarity of the meanings of the Ukrainian word стіл and one! Of the meanings of the English word table. In general sense and in general case words table and стіл are not equal or equivalent – they are equivalent only under specific translation conditions.

This simple idea is very important for the understanding of translation: the words that you find in a dictionary as translations of the given foreign language words are not the universal substitutes of this word in your language. These translations (equivalents) are worth for specific cases which are yet to be determined by the translator.

As we know, the relation between a language sign (word or word combination) and the fragment of the real world it denotes is indirect and intermediated by the mental concept. We also remember that the mental concept of a given language sign is usually rather broad and complex, consisting of a lexical meaning or meanings, a grammatical meaning or meanings, connotations and associations. It is also worth reminding that the mental concept of a word (and word combination) is almost never precisely outlined and may be defined even in the minds of different speakers of the same language, not to mention the speakers of different languages.

All this naturally speaks for the complexity of finding the proper and only translation equivalent of the given word. Translation equivalence never means the sameness of the meaning for the signs of different languages.

Translation equivalents in a dictionary are just the prompts for the translator. One may find a proper equivalent only in speech due to the context, situation and background knowledge.

The idea of translation equivalence is strongly related to that of the unit of translation, i.e. the text length required to obtain proper equivalent.

It is generally known that one word is hardly a common unit of translation, especially in analytical languages with usually polysemantic words. Their meaning strongly depends on the environment. One is more likely to find a universal equivalent for a word combination, in particular for a clichéd one (e.g. hands up, ready made), because a word combination is already a small context and the clichéd expressions are commonly used in similar situations. The general rule of translation reads: the longer is the source text, the bigger is a chance to find proper and correct translation equivalent.

Traditionally and from practical viewpoint the optimal length of text for translation is a sentence. Being a self-sustained syntactic entity a sentence usually contains enough syntactic and semantic information for translation. However, there are cases when a broader stretch of the source text is required. It supplies additional information necessary for translation.

Thus, put with certain degree of simplification, equivalence is a similarity of meaning observed in the units of different languages and used for translation. The units of the target language with meanings similar to the relevant units of the source language are called translation equivalents. Modern translation theory suggests two basic grades of translation equivalents.

Equivalence in translation has been seen in the last four decades as theoretically untenable. Nevertheless, a major part of the activity of terminology management inevitably involves a theory of equivalence in meaning.

If recent theoretical developments in Translation Studies have gradually moved away from the concept of equivalence, or at least of narrow equivalence, the ideas of alignment, parity and sameness which underlie all contemporary translation technology seem to go against the grain of these theoretical evolutions. Even though translation theory has paid relatively little attention to the complexities involving high-end technology, in particular the management of terminological data, the activity plays a vital role in professional translation practice today globally, relying heavily, as it does, in the very notion of equivalence which translation theory has a contention for. In this way, the two are intrinsically linked.

Crucially, theorists and practitioners have now begun to discuss other ways of conceiving what distinguishes one kind of approach to equivalence from another, ideas which are not necessarily linguistic but strategic, cultural and pragmatic. A case in point is the work of the scholar Anthony Pym, for whom equivalences, regardless of

their nature does not take place between locales, they are created by ‘internationalization’ or translation of one kind or another. The scholar goes on to say that equivalences ‘are necessary fictions without necessary correlative beyond the communication situation’. Equivalences might be fictions in their very essence but nevertheless true and realistic in the context of globalised neoliberal communication practices. Pym defends the equivalence paradigm by analysing two competing conceptualisations: ‘directional’ as opposed to ‘natural’ equivalence. If the latter is presumed to occur between languages or cultures prior to the translating act, which in Pym’s view is a misconception based on the historical circumstances of national vernacular languages and print culture, the former stresses the ‘strange way that a relation of equivalence can depend on directionality’, and it is valuable because it allows the translator to choose between several translation strategies. Both models analysed by Pym should be considered in all their complexity.

The notion of equivalence, with its ‘vaguely mathematical heritage’ has been understood primarily in connection to ideas of accuracy, correspondence, fidelity, correctness and identity. In this context, equivalence is concerned with the ways in which the translation is connected to the target text. John C. Catford suggests that ‘reproductions’ of an ‘original’ text in a second, third or multiple languages are analogous to notions of mathematics. The implicit idea in Catford’s theory is that translation is a symmetrical and reversible process, a question of substitution (replacement) of each word or item in the source language by its most adequate equivalent in the target language. This notion of equivalence has generated a lot of controversy amongst theorists and practitioners, not least because the very word ‘equivalence’ is rather polysemic and a number of different meanings coexist under its rubric. Mary Snell-Hornby considers the concept of equivalence as presenting ‘an illusion of symmetry between languages’, and Pym complements this assertion by stating that equivalence creates a ‘presumption of interpretative resemblance’ and, in this sense, it is always ‘presumed’.

### References:

Adequate, literal and free translation, Antonymic translation, Partial Translation Equivalents.