

## The straightforward equivalence between the SL and the TL

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### المرادف المباشر بين لغة المصدر ولغة الهدف

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to explain the concept of equivalence in translation. It is essential for any translation researcher to understand that discussions on "equivalence in translation" should not be confined to a single theorist. Equivalence is a key concept in translation. It is eventually a process of finding an "equal" code in the TL to replace a ST counterpart. Subsequently, this paper seeks to provide a critical review of the concept of equivalence, focusing on well-known translation theorists. Equivalence is defined as the connection between a source text and a target text that validates the target text as a translation of the source text in the first place.

**Keywords:** Source Language, Target Language, Dynamic Equivalence, Formal Equivalence, Semantic Translation, Communicative Translation.

### الملخص

الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة هو توضيح مفهوم الترادف في الترجمة، ويتوجب على المترجم أو الباحث في مجال الترجمة إدراك أن المرادف في الترجمة لا يقتصر على نظرية واحدة، مفهوم الترادف في الترجمة يعد محاولة أساسية للوصول إلى مصطلح موازي في لغة الهدف لنظيره في لغة المصدر. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم رؤية نقدية لمفهوم المرادف في الترجمة، مع التركيز على النظريات الأشهر وواضعيها ومناقشة رؤيتهم للمرادف كمقابل فعلي للغة المصدر، لمتابعة نجاح المترجم في تحقيق أهداف النص الأصلي في الدرجة الأولى.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** لغة المصدر، لغة الهدف، المرادف الديناميكي، المرادف الشكلي، الترجمة الدلالية، الترجمة التواصلية.

### Introduction

Translation involves conveying the meaning of a text from one language to another accurately. It is the process of converting written or spoken content into a different language, essentially altering the surface structure of one language into another. Therefore, translation is an active process where the translator must establish criteria for managing the relationship between the original language and the target language. During this process, the translated text often loses some of the original intentions that the author intended to convey.

This paper aims to briefly explore the concept of "Equivalence in Translation." Equivalence relates to lexical expressive items that share similar meanings or some aspects of meaning. Linguists do not agree on the identification of the degree of similarity which should be existed between two lexical items to consider as equivalent of each other. The translator will face a list of problems extremely needed for a brilliant translator to overcome. These problems are various and different according to both source and receptor language, such as " Equivalence in Translation ", which from my point of view is the most interesting and complicated one, because handling this notion sheds the light on the other countries concepts, beliefs, behaviors and traditions.

It is generally agreed that there are many skills should be possessed by the translator in order to avoid the problem of equivalence, these skills include a deep understanding of the source language, proficiency in the target language, and most importantly, a broad knowledge of both the source and target cultures.

## 1-Related work

The crucial question is not whether the two texts are equivalent, but rather, what kind and level of translation equivalence they reveal. The answer to this question displays a splendid variety, on the one hand, equivalence consists of two main binary oppositions: such is Nida's notorious pair of formal equivalence (focusing on the message itself and aiming at the same form and meaning) and dynamic equivalence (focusing on reception and aiming at the same effect on their respective readers); with different labels but in the similar vein are overt vs. covert by House (1981), semantic vs. communicative put forward by Newmark (1988), imitative vs. functional by Jacobsen (1994) and documentary vs. instrumental by Nord (1997), etc.; On the other hand, equivalence has been categorized into functional, stylistic, semantic, formal or grammatical, statistical, and textual subtypes, with hierarchies established to assign varying levels of importance to different subtypes. Examples include textual equivalence highlighted by Baker (1992) and functional equivalence emphasized by Newman (1994), illustrating the diverse ways in which equivalence can be understood and applied within the realm of translation theory.

### 1.1 Aims of the study

This paper has the following objectives:

- to identify the concept of equivalence in translation through carrying out a comparison between a source text and a target text that validates the target text as a translation of the source text in the first place.
- to demonstrate the values of using well-known theories in achieving the appropriate translation.
- to attempt to shed some light on the types of equivalence and on the crucial role it can play in translating target language texts.

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

Translation from source language texts into target language texts is a major challenge, especially when translating religious, political or even scientific texts, because of their sensitivity. That is why many strategies and theories are adopted to translate them. this paper discusses translating texts and their syntactic structures. It also maintains that the most problems in the translations are due to the use of literal translation that does not consider political, cultural and religious differences. The questions that have to be asked are: What is the translation supposed to achieve? and how does the adopted theory fit in this process of translating language?

### 1.3 Limitation of the study

The present study is limited to investigate the theoretical and practical aspects of the difficulties involved in the process of English Arabic translation; the theoretical aspect clarifies the well-known theories, while the practical one tackles some specimens of different aspects

## 2-The Concept of Equivalence

### 2.1 Definition and Types

Before delving into the issue of "Equivalence in Translation," it is advisable to define it. Numerous definitions can be derived, such as the similarity of meaning between two elements

from distinct languages, one identified as the Source Language (SL) and the other as the Receptor Language (RL). This implies a corresponding word, expression, or cultural concept in another language. Another comprehensive definition characterizes Equivalence as 'accuracy,' 'adequacy,' 'correctness,' 'correspondence,' 'fidelity,' or 'identity.'

Therefore, translation represents a variable concept concerning the relationship between the SL and RL. To simplify this notion, it has been proposed that there are two primary types of equivalence:

A - Perfect equivalence, which denotes a complete correspondence in meaning, although most linguists involved in this field argue that perfect equivalence is either non-existent in language or exceedingly rare.

B - Close equivalence, where words or expressions bear similarity in meaning, indicating some shared aspects but not complete alignment. Theorists have examined equivalence in the translation process through various approaches, offering insights for further exploration in this area. Their theories and concepts will be discussed succinctly to elucidate the meaning of equivalence in translation.

A brief overview is essential to clarify the discussed concept. Therefore, I will briefly touch upon some scholars' theories, followed by simple personal comments. Equivalence has been debated in different dichotomous manners, such as 'formal vs. dynamic equivalence' (Nida), 'semantic vs. communicative translation' (Newmark), 'semantic vs. functional equivalence' (Bell), and so forth.

## 2.2- Equivalence according to Eugene Nida

Eugene Nida, in his book "Towards a Science of Translating," is recognized as the first to discuss translation as a scientific endeavor. He is a prominent proponent of equivalence, particularly highlighting the Formal-Dynamic equivalence theory. This theory underscores the importance of how a translation impacts the target audience and their response to the translated message. Evaluation of a translation can involve comparing the impact of the Target Text (TT) with the intended effect of the Source Text (ST).

Nida (1964) posits that translating involves rendering in the receptor language the nearest natural equivalent of the source language message, primarily in terms of meaning and secondarily in terms of style. The concept of 'closest natural equivalent,' as elucidated by Nida (1964), involves pointing towards the source language message, pointing towards the receptor language, and binding these orientations together based on the highest degree of approximation. Nida distinguishes between two types of equivalence, each presenting its unique challenges, regulations, and translation methodologies. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself in both content and form, striving for correspondences such as poetry with poetry, sentence with sentence, concept with concept, among others. The formal-equivalence translating method, known as "gloss translation," enables the target language reader to identify with the source language reader, facilitating an understanding of cultural codes and native speakers' ways of thinking. Nida suggests that such translations may require footnotes and commentaries but cautions against adding extraneous information to the TT, suggesting that only linguistically implicit aspects of the ST should be included.

Conversely, Nida introduces another form of equivalence based on the principle of the "identical effect." Dynamic translating aims to elicit a similar effect on the TT readers as the

ST has on the SL readers. Nida provides examples like translating "Holy Kiss" to "a hearty handshake all around" or "White as snow" to "white as egret feathers" to illustrate this concept. So, Nida believes that: "The best translational works sound like they are not translations", but rather evoke a natural response from readers. He emphasizes that achieving an equivalent response is crucial for a successful translation, along with making sense, capturing the spirit and manner of the original, having a natural and easy form of expression, and eliciting a similar response. Dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the meaning of the text in a manner best suited to the receptor language, rather than a word-for-word rendition, contrasting with formal equivalence.

In essence, dynamic equivalence entails the translator's intention to convey the text's meaning in a manner that aligns with the receptor language's expressions. Nida and Taber suggest that formal correspondence involves using a receptor language item that closely represents the equivalent of a source language word or phrase, whenever possible. Dynamic equivalence is exemplified by Nida's explanation of how "Lamb of God" could be translated as "seal of God" for the Eskimos, where the cultural symbolism differs. This approach aims to evoke a similar response from the target language readers as the source language text did from its original audience.

In this case, a literal translation which represents the formal equivalence does not mean anything in a different culture, so there is no solution other than the dynamic equivalence. "The form of the RL text is not new message, but it is the closest natural equivalent, and the aim is to get the same response by the RL text as did the SL text on its reader" 5. This means, the RL reader's reaction and affection must be similar to the SL reader's ones, this may lead to disposition which Nida called dynamic.

### 2.3- Equivalence according to Vinay, J. and J. Darbelnet

It is the best choice for translator, who has to deal with the idioms, proverbs, nominal or adjectival phrases, if a text in the Source Language is difficult to understand in the context of that language, it is then bound to lose more after translating into the receptor language. But the translator must be wary of misunderstanding the equivalence in translation, because understanding an utterance depends on endless list of factors, otherwise translation may lead to problems especially when the translator tries to deal with concepts; which is harder than translating cultures, such as The Holy Qur'an: "A German scholar contends that the Islamic texts has been mistranscribed and promises raisins, not virgins" Newsweek: (p 51), by Stefan Theil, July 28, 2003.

This is a headline of an article in the Newsweek, the scholar is interested in studying the Middle Eastern languages- Aramaic- and he depends on the equivalence between two languages (Arabic and Aramaic), he says that, what are described as "houris" الحور العين refer to nothing more than "white raisins" and "juicy fruits".

The German one did not stop here; the article contains plenty of other examples, here are two of them:

{ وَلَيُضِرَّنَّ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ } Sura 24 AL-Noor from the "verse" 31 .

"Draw their veils over their bosoms"

which means " snap their carves over their bags", it becomes in Aramaic " snap their belts around their waists" and this is extremely different from the intended meaning, and

{ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ } Sura 33 AL-Ah'zab from the "verse" 40 .

"Seal of the prophets" means the final prophet of God; it becomes in Aramaic "witness of the prophets". This is one of the examples of the translation faults occurred by misunderstanding the equivalence. The meaning of a Qur'anic word or term, for example, should not then be determined according to the changes that might have occurred as a result of the time gap since the Qur'an was firstly revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) until today. The words in general should be understood in the light of what they meant then. This actually does not mean that a great number of words have changed slightly or fully in meaning.

## 2.4- Equivalence according to Roman Jakobson

Languages are different from a grammatical point of view, but this does not mean a translation cannot be possible, in other words the translator may face some sorts of difficulty in order to find equivalence in translating from SL to RL. In these cases, when there is no a lexical equivalent item, it is up to the translator to choose the most suitable term by rendering it in the RL. Jakobson's theory can be concluded as "It is essentially based on his semiotic approach to translation according to which the translator has to recode the ST message first and then he has to transmit it into an equivalent message for the RL".

Jakobson says that there does not always exist full equivalence between them and the words or code-units, which are to be translated. Content and structure are different sometimes.

Even though words and code-units can be replaced and translated by synonyms, there is no full equivalence between these words and code-units. Therefore, content and structure are different and can't be equivalent all the time. Jakobson cited an example: Cheese can't be completely identified with its Russian synonym because the latter doesn't include cottage cheese as the former does.

## 2.5- Equivalence as viewed by Peter Newmark

Newmark rejects the "principle of equivalence", which underlies Nida's theory of the dynamic equivalence. He basis his rejection on three accounts:

The equivalent effect is not always attainable especially when the ST deals with cultural codes not understood by the TL readers. The equivalent effect is not necessarily important. This has to do with text types, which are according to him: expressive, informative and vocative. Difference in text types may entail different translation strategies. A dynamic-equivalence-based translation usually entails loss of meaning.

Newmark suggests the semantic communicative translation. In principle, one could say that semantic translation is similar to Nida's formal equivalence and that communicative translation is similar to Nida's dynamic equivalence. Semantic and communicative translation strategies are more or less the same as Nida's formal/dynamic equivalence. This would mean that no real progress is made. Newmark mixes between word-for-word equivalence on the one hand and literal translation on the other one. There is a big difference between word-for-word translation and literal one. The first is a strategy used in linear translation for the purpose of comparing and contrasting two language systems, while literal translation does not necessarily reflect the SL language mechanisms.

The word "communicative" may denote that "semantic translation" is not a communicative strategy, i.e., incapable of establishing communication.

أنا وزوجي مقطوعين من شجرة يعني "طنجرة ولقيت غطاها"

We are like a pot having found its bonnet. (Semantic)

We are a perfect match. (communicative)

Dynamic equivalence and communicative equivalence are more or less similar. Here, the translator perceives the ST message and tries to put it as natural as possible in the TT. Consider the following example: out of the frying pan into the fire.

A translator may tend to replace the English proverb into the well-known Arabic counterpart: "كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار". But it would be much better if we render the ST proverb by extracting the idea of the proverb and putting it in the way it is usually said in Arabic. Thus, it is suggested to render as: سارت الأمور من سيئ إلى أسوء

Newmark (1981: 38) states that "opinion swung between literal and free, faithful and beautiful, exact and natural translation, depending on whether the bias was to be in favour of the author or the reader, the source or the target language of the text." Newmark says "communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original" and that "semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structure of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" (1981: 39).

## 2.6- Equivalence as viewed by Baker

According to Baker, translator must pay attention to the RL culture in addition to SL one, in other words they must not be only bilingual, but bicultural too. Faithfulness in meaning and style is in great demand, but the competent translator can render the SL text, even if it is a culture specific. "The source language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture." and "it may be related to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food."

In English, on the one hand, some affixes in both prefix and suffix forms have no direct equivalents in other languages, and this enforce the translator to look for the closest equivalent. "Frequently, some idioms, articles or prepositions are not existed in some languages, in such situations, we can say that the equivalence in the RL is zero". On the other hand, in Arabic there is no for example, indefinite article, while in English there are two (a, an). In Arabic, the word سيارتان occurs and it's equivalent in English is 'cars', but they do not have the same formally corresponding term, because, the latter is a term in a numeric system describe only singular and plural while the former is a term in a numeric system could describe dual too. Also, there is no gender in English to distinguish between the male and the female.

This second product is not necessarily equivalent at word level to the first product due to the different thoughts and concepts in both SL and RL. Mona Baker gave a good example for the mistranslating utterances, she said that, the Arabic word شهيد does not always mean martyr in English, and to convey the idea, she projected four or more sentences – in Arabic by the projector but the first was in English - contain the word martyr:

المصري الذي اختطف و قتل في العراق شهيد.

لسه بنذور شهداء من تحت الأرض.

و عندنا.... متخلفون عقليا استشهدوا ، و عندنا معاقين استشهدوا

خلال دائرة قطرها 30 متر وجدنا عشرة شهداء.

She here means that the word شهيد is not always an equivalent to martyr, sometimes we must use corpse or victim Those examples indicated by herself in the academy of graduate studies – Tripoli- Saturday 19-11-2005. The lecture title is "Reframing narratives in translation", in the seminar " Translation Across Cultures ".

Baker (1992) discusses various equivalence problems and their possible solutions at word, above word, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic levels. She takes a bottom-up approach for pedagogical reasons. Baker proceeds with her equivalence discussion from word to further upward levels. She claims "translators must not underestimate the cumulative effect of thematic choices on the way we interpret text" (ibid.: 129).

## 2.7- Equivalence as viewed by Arabs

Many scholars have studied synonymy or *tara:duf* الترادف in the Arabic language, and, categorically, we have two opposite views. One view supports the claim that absolute synonymy is possible and that it does exist in Arabic, while the other denies this claim completely and tries to explain the differences between the lexical items which the supporters of the former view claim to be synonyms.

In the following paragraph, the equivalence would be discussed through an Arabic point of view. According to Abu Hilal AL-Askari "It is not possible for two words to have the same sense, because this would imply useless duplication"

So, perfect equivalence does not exist in any language because every single word has got a set of associations, or components unique to it. This means that many words might share some associations, but not all of them, otherwise, the second word are not existed. In view of the above, it is obvious that the world is still in need of more linguistic refinement and better understanding of the differences existing between languages. Globalization has made the need for this more urgent than any time before.

The best examples to explain this, are three examples which will show, the equivalence in similar and different cultures; "first in English the word sheep occurs, however, the words lamb, ram, and ewe also include the meaning sheep but they have additional meanings of young in lamb, adult and male in ram, and adult and female in ewe", these words somehow have equivalents in the Arabic language lamb means حمل, ram means خروف and ewe means نعجة.

Second in Arabic the words البعير - البكرة - البكر - البعير - البازل - الصرمة - الهجمة - الهنيذة - الناقة - الجمل - الليث - البكرة - البكر - البعير - الإبل refer to the same meaning which is camel. like the previous example each word has an additional meaning according to " Li'san Al-Arab" for example الناقة means adult female, الجمل adult male, البكرة means young female, البكر means young male etc. But in English there is no equivalents for the huge number of the camel names, the reason is our culture and traditions as Arabs who are connected to these animals.

The last example is the dog names in the English language ,it has been accounted 14 names for dog in Al-Mawrid Dictionary such as: beagle – bulldog – clumber – collie – dingo – spaniel – cur – hound –pedigree – mongrel – Dalmatian – Alsatian –dachshund – Pekinese – Labrador – Great Dane – terrier, whereas in the Arabic language, there is no enough equivalents to contain these names, so we use the transliteration to explain, in spite of that Al - Sewtti said that there are more than 60 names for dogs in the Arabic, and he versified them in 37 verses – I've read and found it hard or impossible to be understood\*\*such as: القَلْطِيُّ, الفَلْحَسُ, الأَعْدَرُ, السَخَامُ, الخَيْطَلُ, but we don't use those names, whereas the English people consider it as a part of their everyday language. Accordingly, maybe there is no perfect equivalent, but most of the obvious words share some associations or factors, so that when there is no equivalent it is preferred to render the meaning and convey the message.

## Conclusion

It is evident that achieving perfect equivalence in translation is unattainable. By "perfect equivalents," we refer to the seamless substitution of one lexical item with another across all contexts, conveying the exact message without any loss or addition of meaning. Translation involves navigating two distinct linguistic systems that differ comprehensively, reflecting deeper disparities between societies and cultures. Consequently, achieving equivalence in translation, especially at the word-for-word level, is a relative concept, and becomes even more challenging in larger textual contexts.

Translators may need to deviate from the literal translation of source language (SL) texts to capture the overall meaning effectively. However, before taking such liberties, translators must first exhaustively search for potential equivalents in lexicons and references, ensuring that the essence of the original message is preserved as closely as possible.

To produce a satisfactory translation, a translator must possess a thorough understanding of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, idiomatic, religious, and cultural nuances of both the source language (SL) and target language (TL). The goal is not just to translate language but to convey culture faithfully, bridging the differences and nuances between them. Equivalence in translation should not be viewed as a quest for identical representation, especially when acknowledging the principle of non-equivalence.

An Italian proverb aptly states, "The translator is a traitor." This adage underscores the dilemma faced by translators, where those opting for idiomatic translations may be criticized by proponents of literal translations, and vice versa. Ultimately, it reflects a consensus that regardless of the translation approach taken—idiomatic or literal—the translator is viewed as betraying one aspect or another.

In conclusion, while synonymy is a common linguistic feature across languages, achieving perfect or absolute synonymy, defined as the complete interchangeability of lexical items in all contexts without any nuances, is deemed unattainable. This definition of absolute synonymy is likely impossible in any language due to the inherent complexities and nuances of language and culture.

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