



The Concept of Equivalence and Its Types in Literary Translation

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Abstract:

In translation studies, the concept of equivalence plays a crucial role in ensuring that the translated text maintains the meaning, function, and cultural context of the original. Literary translation demands particular attention to stylistic, emotional, and idiomatic nuances, making equivalence more than a literal reproduction. Scholars such as Jakobson, Nida, Catford, and Newmark have explored various models of equivalence, ranging from formal to dynamic, functional, and communicative approaches. Despite extensive theoretical discussions, practical applications of equivalence types—especially communicative and idiomatic—in English to Uzbek translation remain underexplored, particularly with culturally embedded expressions and proverbs. This article aims to analyze different types of equivalence in literary translation from English into Uzbek, with a focus on lexical, grammatical, communicative, idiomatic, and transformational levels. The study demonstrates that effective translation requires selecting the appropriate equivalence strategy based on context and communicative intent. Examples show that literal translation may fail to convey the intended meaning, and thus communicative and idiomatic approaches are often necessary for natural and culturally resonant translations. By providing detailed comparative examples and highlighting how translators navigate structural, semantic, and cultural differences, the article enriches our understanding of equivalence in a specific language pair—English and Uzbek. The findings underscore the importance of translator competence not only in language but also in cultural literacy, which is essential for preserving the artistic and emotional impact of literary texts across languages.

Keywords: Equivalency, Literary Translation, Lexical and Grammatical Equivalence, Communicative Translation, Idiomatic Expressions

Introduction

The relationship between a source text (ST) and its translation (target text, TT), when the TT replicates pertinent elements of the LT, is known as equivalency, and it is a key topic in translation studies[1]. Equivalency in literary translation refers to maintaining style, tone, and cultural influence in addition to accurately expressing the text's meaning. According to Jakobson, interlingual translation entails substituting TL signs for SL signs in order to attain equivalent meaning because early theorists viewed it as a linguistic process. Similar distinctions are made between textual equivalence and formal correspondences (a TL element holding the same structural position as an SL element) by Catford[2].

Equivalence in literary translation is one of the most critical and debated concepts in translation studies, forming the foundation for assessing how faithfully a translated text reflects the meaning, tone, and cultural nuances of the original. The process of translating from English to Uzbek presents unique challenges due to structural, lexical, and cultural differences between the two languages. While early theorists like Roman Jakobson and J.C. Catford approached translation primarily through linguistic correspondence, later scholars expanded the concept to include functional and communicative equivalence[3]. In particular, Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence and Peter Newmark's communicative and semantic approaches underscore the need to ensure that translated texts evoke the same impact on the target audience as the source does on its original readers. Literary translation is not just a matter of word-for-word substitution; it involves conveying idiomatic expressions, emotional undertones, and contextual meaning with accuracy and creativity. This study explores lexical, grammatical, communicative, and idiomatic equivalence, emphasizing the translator's dual role as both a linguistic expert and cultural mediator[4].

Literature review

The source and target texts are not necessarily the same when they are translated to be equivalent. It is a measure of how similar the source and target texts are to one another. The source and target texts may be structurally, semantically, and pragmatically identical from a semiotic perspective[5]. Both texts must have the same communicative purpose, meaning they must be pragmatically equal to the source text. The receptor must be affected by the target text in the same way as by the source text.

The closest formal correlation between the source and target texts is implied by structural similarities."Eugene Nida established a useful distinction between formal (structural) and dynamic (functional) equivalency concerning equivalency." Close structural connection to the source is the goal of formal equivalency; the translator tries to "as closely as possible" match the TL's forms and parts to the SL. To enable readers to see the original structure, this may frequently entail an interpretive, nearly literal rendition (helpful in academic or legal translation)[6]. Dynamic (later known as functional) equivalency, on the other hand, emphasizes effect. The goal of dynamic equivalent translation is "complete naturalness of expression" and "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" for the intended audience.

- In actuality, this implies that the translator modifies word choice, grammar, and cultural allusions to ensure that the target audience has the same impact as the original audience.

According to Nida, "the ultimate test of translation is the impact on readers: that the translation makes sense, embodies the spirit of the original, reads naturally, and responds similarly." Roman Jakobson proposed a semiotic framework for translation and distinguished three categories that he categorized:

- intralingual (rewriting),
- interlingual (correct translation)
- intersemiotic (transition to another sign system)[7].

He maintained that "the replacement of a verbal sign by another sign belonging to another language" is one way to define interlingual translation. The translator must, in other words, identify TL signs that are semantically similar to SL indications. However, only the meaning ("the signified") can be fully similar due to the differences between the SL and TL systems; the form ("the signifier") cannot be transferred word for word. Translation is viewed as a system-level operation in Catford's linguistic theory as well. Any TL category that holds the "same" structural position as an SL category is considered a formal correspondent, according to him. When the structure or meaning of the SL-TL pair varies, translational transformation takes place. The notion that a portion of the TT is comparable to a portion of the LT in a particular context is known as Catford's textual equivalency[8]. Since absolute equivalency is rarely attained, both Jacobson and Catford stress the (often faulty) structural correspondences required in translating.

Functional and communicative representations Equivalence was expanded by later theorists to include the functional domain of communication. Peter Newmark stressed the objective of equal effect while proposing semantic and communicative translation. He maintained that "as long as an equivalent effect is guaranteed, literal translation... is the only correct method." To put it another way, if a literal depiction can effectively communicate the content to the intended reader, it is favored. A communicative (more flexible) method is used in place of a literal translation if it results in an unnatural TT (for instance, the warning sign Bissiger Hund becomes "Beware of the dog!" instead of "Dog bite!" when translated literally). Mona Baker provides a thorough taxonomy of equivalency at multiple linguistic levels.

It recognizes grammatical equivalence (structures and categories), pragmatic equivalence (reader effects), word-level equivalence (polysemy, non-equivalence, and word choice), and supra-word equivalence (fixed phrases, combinations, and idioms)[9]. For instance, Baker lists numerous forms of word-level equivalency (culture terminology, conceptual gaps) and suggests methods for resolving them (generalization, paraphrase, omission). Each level has unique challenges[10].

The following categories of equivalence are also distinguished by Werner Koller's model: denotative (lexical meaning), connotative (stylistic and emotional tone), textual-normative (genre/style conventions), pragmatic (reader task), and formal (reappearance of form). "He stresses that equivalency is relative in nature, depending on the interaction of linguistic and extralinguistic factors as well as the cultural-historical context"[11].

Methods

This study examines various forms of equivalence in translation from English to Uzbek using a qualitative, descriptive methodology. To demonstrate how lexical, grammatical, communicative, and idiomatic equivalence work in real-world translation scenarios, a few English phrases, idioms, and proverbs were compared with their Uzbek versions. Semantic, grammatical, and cultural faithfulness of translations were assessed using analytical techniques such contextual interpretation and comparative analysis. Key translation experts including V. Komissarov, P. Newmark, J. Vinay, and J. Darbelnet offered theoretical insights that served as a basis for assessing equivalency on both a literal and functional level. The study emphasizes how important it is for translators to maintain tone, context, and cultural resonance in addition to message when translating literary works[12]..

Results and Discussion

V. Komissarov asserts that there are five distinct degrees of equivalence: situational, pragmatic, lexical (semantic), grammatical, and structural levels. Equivalency in practice

The linguistic context and the translation's communicative goal are taken into consideration while implementing pragmatic equivalency. This kind of equivalency should translate the source language's meaning into the target language to the point that the reader or listener is affected in the same way as in the original text. For instance, it is best to translate English phrases like "Thank you very much" into

Uzbek as "Katta rahmat" or "Judayam mzuraman."

- Although there is no complete grammatical correspondence, the pragmatic purpose - gratitude - is preserved.
- First of all, the translation must preserve the communicative function of the source text. A description and enumeration of speech functions can be found in the work of R. Jacobson, who indicated the following[13].
- Informative function - transmitting information
- For example; I am green with envy because of the success of my competitor.
- Emotional function - expressing the feelings of the speaker:
- Why do I need such a friend? - What on earth do I need such a friend for?
- Conative function, which is the expression of will: Would you please do me a favor?
- Phatic function or building a relationship through communication
- The metalingual function, which describes the characteristics of language:

Don't cause trouble unless you cause trouble. Avoid causing difficulty until it causes you trouble. Alternatively, don't worry about trouble until it bothers you. There is only one thing that these phrases have in common: a communicative aim or task. At first look, it appears that the source and target texts are not logically related; they typically refer to different contexts, have different grammatical structures, and lack common semes, which are the smallest units of meaning.

Equivalence of Situations various words and structures may be used in the source and target texts to explain the same scenario from various angles:

I meant no harm-Men hech qanday zarar yetkazishni xoxlamagandim.(avtobusdagi holati)

Who shall I say is calling?-Kim qo'ng'iroq qilepti, dep ayte?(telfondagi holat)Wet paint.-Extiyot buling, buyoq hali qurimagan (xiyobondagi xolat)[14].

There are no similar lexical or structural units among these peers. Consequently, they differ in their content, word semantics, and the grammatical relationships among the sentence's constituent parts. However, the communicative roles of the statements and the similarity of the circumstance described make them correlate to one another. V. Komissarov refers to this kind of equivalency as "situation identification" because of its distinctiveness. Different languages frequently depict the same issue. This is particularly valid for well-known expressions:

Fragile -mo'rt

Beware of the dog!- Itdan ehtiyot bo'ling!

Push/Pull-tortmoq

Some scenarios are impossible to interpret, such as "Enjoy your meal!" which has no English counterpart. The English utilize the French expression "Bon appetit" to bridge this gap. Equivalence in Semantics Dealing with meaning change involves semantic changes or semantic paraphrases of the source-language sentence. The original statement, for instance, may be interpreted as though it were viewed from a different angle: There were no similarities between him and his mother. I am proud to say that he is my son[15]. Alternatively, a few words from the statement in the source language are translated: She was as slender as a toothpick after her illness. She was as slender as a toothpick after her illness. Alternatively, the notion may be more fully expressed in the target sentence than in the source sentence. Boris doesn't feel like making jokes today. - Boris doesn't feel like making jokes today.

Although the source and target phrases have different grammatical forms, they serve the same purpose, depict the same scenario, and have roughly the same meanings at this level of equivalency. Semes, the smallest meaning components, are recognized to make up each word's meaning. The source and target sentences have the same set of semes, but they are arranged differently, which causes them to speak differently and have different syntactic structures."Two sentences at this level are equivalent because they have approximately the same way of describing the situation," according to V. Komissarov.

Transformational Equivalency. When a sentence's grammatical structure is altered to make it grammatically correct and natural in the target language while maintaining its original meaning, this is known as transformational equivalency.. The port can be entered by big ships only in tide.- Portga faqat suv ko'tarilgan paytda katta kemalar kira oladi. The same sentence can be changed while translating into the target language. We had a long walk. – Biz uzoq yurdik. The structure of the sentence might be changed. Jane was heard playing the piano. – Jeynning pianino chalyotgani eshtildi.

Any other alteration in a sentence's grammatical meaning signifies equivalency at the transformational level, "which V. Komissarov called the invariant level of meaning of the syntactic structure." This degree of equivalency suggests that the sentence function is maintained, that the same scenario is described, that the source and target sentences have the same meaning, and that the grammatical meanings are quite similar but differ.

Lexical and Grammatical Equivalency

The content correspondence of words or phrases between the source and destination languages is known as lexical equivalency. This kind of equivalency guarantees that the translated word accurately captures the original text's meaning.

The goal of grammatical equivalency is to guarantee that grammatical forms, including gender, number, case, verb tenses, and word order, are consistent in both form and meaning. The greatest degree of semantic similarity between the source and target sentences is discovered at this level: Every mother loves her children.- Har bir ona o'z bolasini sevadi. I will write you every week. – Man sanga har hafta yozaman.

This is actually a literal translation, meaning that every word and the entire structure maintain their lexical and grammatical meaning, the sentences' situation is the same, and the sentences' communicative function is the same. Every variation of the desired sentence is identical to the original sentence in the target language.

Communicative and Idiomatic Equivalency

Important translation techniques are communicative and idiomatic equivalency, which guarantee a translation of the text that is not just lexical but also substantive, stylistic, and culturally relevant. These two methods are crucial for maintaining the translation's emotional effect, comprehensibility, and naturalness, particularly when translating literary works.

Communicative Equivalency

An strategy known as "communicative equivalency" aims to provide the target audience the same impression that the original author intended. P. Newmark asserts that "in this approach, the translator focuses on the intelligibility and naturalness of the message, rather than grammatical form and verbosity." Take the English sentence that follows, for instance: "Keep off the grass". If it is translated word by word, it is translated like this: "Choponni bosmang", but the meaning changes in uzbek. Therefore, a communicative approach is used to translate this phrase, "Maysaga chiqmang" in order to show an exact meaning in uzbek.

Idiomatic Equivalency

The process of translating idioms or culturally relevant words using their functional and semantic

equivalents rather than their literal translations is known as idiomatic equivalency. According to J. Vina and J. Darbelne, this method involves using the language's other expressions to naturalize the translation.

For instance “It is raining cats and dogs.” If it is translated word-for-word, it is translated like “Mushuklar va itlar yog’yapti”. Therefore, it is translated as an idiomatic equivalency like “Yomg’ir shaldirab yog’moqda” or “Jala yog’moqda”.

When translating proverbs, idioms, and humorous and ironic expressions, idiomatic equivalents are particularly crucial. This approach requires the translator to have a deep understanding not only of the language, but also of intercultural thinking.

Conclusion

One of the primary instruments for maintaining the spirit and content of literary translation is communicative and idiomatic equivalency. The idiomatic approach adds cultural and stylistic significance to the text, whereas the communicative approach seeks to communicate the message succinctly and clearly. Both of these methods require the translator to be creative, linguistically sensitive, and culturally aware while translating from English to Uzbek.

This study has demonstrated that the concept of equivalence in literary translation encompasses a diverse range of categories—lexical, grammatical, communicative, idiomatic, situational, and transformational—all of which are essential for preserving the meaning, emotional tone, and cultural context of the source text in the target language. The findings reinforce that true equivalence goes beyond word-for-word correspondence, requiring the translator to assess context, intent, and cultural resonance. Communicative and idiomatic equivalencies, in particular, play a critical role in maintaining the naturalness and expressiveness of the translated text, ensuring that the intended effect on the reader mirrors that of the original audience. By incorporating perspectives from prominent scholars such as V. Komissarov, P. Newmark, and J. Vinay, the analysis confirms that translation is both a linguistic and interpretive act that demands a deep understanding of both source and target cultures. The translator's role, therefore, is not only to transfer semantic meaning but to act as a cultural bridge, skillfully adapting expressions, idioms, and stylistic nuances. The study underscores the importance of flexibility and creativity in the translation process and highlights how multiple levels of equivalence must be considered to ensure a high-quality literary translation. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of translation theory and practice, offering valuable implications for both academic scholarship and professional translation.

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