

THE ISSUE OF EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

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Annontatsiya: Ushbu maqolada tarjimada ekvivalentlik masalasi, uning nazariy asoslari va tarjimashunos olimlar tomonidan ishlab chiqilgan turli yondashuvlar muhokama qilinadi. Maqolada kontseptsiyaning paydo bo'lishi va rivojlanishi, uning tarjima jarayonidagi ahamiyati va ekvivalentlikka ta'sir qiluvchi lingvistik, semantik va pragmatik jihatlar o'rganiladi. Shuningdek, u lingvistik shakl, kommunikativ maqsad va madaniy moslashuv o'rtasidagi bog'liqlikni o'rganadi, tarjimonning kompetensiyasi va ijodkorligini manba va maqsadli matnlar o'rtasida ekvivalentlikka erishishda hal qiluvchi omillar sifatida ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: Ekvivalentlik, tarjima nazariyasi, semantik moslik, pragmatik ekvivalentlik, dinamik ekvivalentlik, kommunikativ tarjima, tarjima jarayoni, tarjimonning kompetensiyasi.

Annotation: This article discusses the issue of equivalence in translation, its theoretical background, and the various approaches developed by translation scholars. The paper examines the emergence and development of the concept, its significance in the translation process, and the linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects influencing equivalence. It also explores the relationship between linguistic form, communicative purpose, and cultural adaptation, emphasizing the translator's competence and creativity as decisive factors in achieving equivalence between the source and target texts.

Keywords: Equivalence, translation theory, semantic correspondence, pragmatic equivalence, dynamic equivalence, communicative translation, translation process, translator's competence.

Translation is one of the oldest and most essential human activities, serving as a bridge between languages, cultures, and civilizations. It plays a key role in intercultural communication, knowledge exchange, and the globalization of information. However, despite its ancient history, translation remains a complex linguistic and cultural phenomenon that constantly raises new theoretical and practical challenges.

Among these challenges, the issue of *equivalence* holds a central position. Equivalence refers to the degree of correspondence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). It is the measure by which translators assess whether a translation faithfully reproduces the meaning, style, and communicative function of the original.

Yet, achieving full equivalence is often impossible, as every language reflects a unique worldview and cultural experience.

One of the earliest systematic definitions was offered by **J. C. Catford [3]**, who described translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).” For Catford, equivalence was primarily **linguistic**, determined by formal and grammatical correspondences between languages.

In contrast, **Eugene Nida [8]** introduced a more functional and communicative perspective. He distinguished between **formal equivalence**, which focuses on preserving the structure and content of the source text, and **dynamic equivalence**, which seeks to evoke the same response in the target audience as the original did in its readers. Nida’s approach marked a shift from linguistic form to communicative effect.

Later, **Peter Newmark [7]** proposed the distinction between **semantic translation** and **communicative translation**. Semantic translation emphasizes fidelity to the source text’s meaning, while communicative translation prioritizes the reader’s comprehension and naturalness of expression.

Russian scholars, such as **A. Komissarov** and **V. Barkhudarov**, developed a multi-level model of equivalence, identifying five levels: The goal of communication, the descriptive content, the situation reflected in the text, the structural organization, the stylistic and emotional tone. Each level demonstrates that equivalence extends beyond mere linguistic accuracy to include pragmatic and cultural dimensions.

At the highest level lies **communicative purpose**, sometimes referred to as **pragmatic equivalence**. This level ensures that the *overall intention and function* of the translation coincide with those of the original text. In other words, both the ST and TT should achieve the same communicative goal — to inform, persuade, instruct, entertain, or evoke emotion. *For example*, if the purpose of an English advertisement is to attract customers (“Buy now and save 50%!”), the Uzbek translation (“Hozir xarid qiling va 50% tejang!”) should preserve the same persuasive and motivational effect, even if the words or syntax differ. Communicative purpose is crucial because the translation must perform *the same social and functional role* within its cultural environment.

Without this alignment, even a linguistically accurate translation can fail to communicate effectively.

The Level of Descriptive Content (Situational Equivalence) focuses on the **situational content** — that is, the event, action, or situation described by the text. Here, the translator ensures that the **same real-world situation** is represented in both texts, regardless of linguistic form. *For example*, in the sentence “He opened the window,” an equivalent translation into Uzbek (“U derazani ochdi”) depicts the same physical action and situational reality. Even if the grammatical structures differ, the

extralinguistic meaning — the real-life act — remains constant. Komissarov notes that this level forms the *core of meaning transfer*: as long as the situation described remains the same, communication succeeds, even if lexical or structural discrepancies appear¹⁰.

The Level of Semantic Meaning (Conceptual Equivalence) equivalence involves the **semantic content** of the text — the relationship between words, phrases, and their underlying conceptual meaning. This is often referred to as **conceptual** or **notional equivalence**. Semantic equivalence is achieved when the translation conveys the *same ideas, relations, and logical structure* as the original. For instance, translating “The meeting was postponed due to weather conditions” as “Ob-havo sababli yig‘ilish kechiktirildi” retains the same semantic relations: an event (the meeting), a cause (weather), and a result (postponement). However, full semantic equivalence is often difficult because different languages conceptualize reality differently. Therefore, translators sometimes employ paraphrasing, restructuring, or compensation techniques to approximate meaning without distorting it.

The Level of Textual or Structural Organization (Grammatical Equivalence) refers to the **syntactic and structural** organization of the text. It examines how words and clauses are combined to form sentences and paragraphs, and how textual cohesion and coherence are maintained. Grammatical equivalence ensures that logical relationships (such as cause and effect, condition, contrast) are properly conveyed. *For example*:

- ST: “Although it was raining, they continued the game.”
- TT: “Yomg‘ir yog‘ayotgan bo‘lsa ham, ular o‘yinni davom ettirishdi.”

Here, the subordinate conjunction (“although / bo‘lsa ham”) maintains the same logical connection, even though the grammatical patterns differ. Komissarov emphasized that grammatical equivalence does *not* mean structural identity; rather, it requires **functional correspondence** — preserving the logical and stylistic relations that hold the text together.

The fifth level — the **stylistic or expressive level** — is concerned with the tone, emotional color, and stylistic register of the text. It involves maintaining the same expressive function, aesthetic quality, and level of formality as the source text. For example, translating a formal legal document requires maintaining its impersonal and precise tone, while translating poetry demands reproducing rhythm, imagery, and emotional resonance. Consider the following literary example:

- ST: “The night was dark and silent, save for the whisper of leaves.”
- TT: “Tun qorong‘i va sokin edi, faqat yaproqlarning shiviri eshitilardi.”

¹⁰ Komissarov, V. N. (1990). *Theory of Translation*. Moscow: Vysshaya Shkola.

Here, the translation conveys not just meaning but also the poetic imagery and emotional atmosphere - an example of expressive equivalence. Stylistic equivalence is often the most challenging to achieve because stylistic norms differ widely among languages. The translator must therefore make creative choices to evoke comparable emotional responses while respecting the stylistic conventions of the target culture. Komissarov's five levels are not isolated categories but **interconnected layers** of equivalence that function together. A translation can achieve equivalence at several levels simultaneously, though not always at all of them. For instance, in scientific or technical texts, structural and semantic equivalence may dominate, whereas in literature, stylistic and pragmatic equivalence become more significant. There are different types and levels of *Equivalence*, that equivalence is not a monolithic concept; it can manifest on different levels depending on the nature of the text and the translator's task. Cultural equivalence becomes essential when words or expressions refer to specific cultural realities. *For instance*, translating "Thanksgiving" into Uzbek may require an explanatory adaptation, such as "Amerikadagi minnatdorchilik bayrami," rather than a direct translation. Languages are deeply embedded in their respective cultures, and translation inevitably involves transferring not just linguistic forms but also cultural meanings. Cultural concepts, idioms, metaphors, and humor are often untranslatable in a direct sense. The translator must therefore balance fidelity and naturalness, applying **cultural substitution, adaptation, or explicitation** strategies. According to **Juliane House [4]** views translation as a pragmatic act that produces a text functionally equivalent to the original within its sociocultural environment. She differentiates between **overt translation** (visible foreignness, such as in classics) and **covert translation** (naturalized, localized forms). In practice, translators must decide what kind of equivalence to prioritize, depending on the genre and communicative goal:

- ❖ **Scientific and legal texts** → Formal and semantic equivalence;
- ❖ **Advertising, literature, and media** → Dynamic or pragmatic equivalence;
- ❖ **Religious or historical texts** → Balanced equivalence between meaning and tone.

For instance, the famous Shakespearean phrase "*To be or not to be*" has been translated differently across languages, but all versions aim to retain its philosophical depth and emotional intensity rather than its literal syntax.

Translators also face challenges such as:

- Absence of lexical equivalents
- Cultural connotations and idioms
- Stylistic inconsistencies

- Context-dependent meanings

Achieving equivalence requires **linguistic awareness**, **cultural knowledge**, and **creative problem-solving skills**. The translator becomes both an interpreter and a re-creator of meaning. While equivalence has long dominated translation theory, it has also been criticized. A competent translator strives not for perfect sameness - which is impossible — but for **functional harmony**, ensuring that the translation serves its communicative purpose while respecting the original's intent and spirit. In short, equivalence is both a **principle** and a **goal** — a guiding ideal that helps translators navigate between languages and cultures while preserving the essential unity of human communication.

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