AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Department of International Relations

Chair of Diplomatic Translation

**Translation business in the field of international and legal relations**

**“Linguistic and cultural aspects of translation”**

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Lecture 14

Module 3 Linguistic and cultural aspects of translation transformations

Lecture 14 Equivalence in translation

T he prevalent concept in the 1950s for most translation theory is equivalence.Translating is generally seen as a process of communicating the foreign text byestablishing a relationship of identity or analogy with it. Equivalence can be said to be thecentral issue in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within thefield of translation theory have caused heated controversy, and many different theories ofthe concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field in the past fifty years.Approaches to the question of equivalence differ radically. Theorists as Catford (1965),Nida & Taber (1969) and Koller (1995), define translation in terms of equivalence rela-tions, while others, such as Snell-Hornby (1988) reject the theoretical notion of equiva-lence, holding that it is either irrelevant or damaging to translation studies. However,Baker (1992) adopts a middle course, using this notion for the sake of convenience -because most translators are used to it rather than because it has any theoretical status.Those in favor of equivalence-based theories of translation define equivalence as the rela-tionship between a source-text and a target text that allows the TT to be deemed as a trans-lation of the ST in the first place. Theorists who maintain that translation is contingentupon equivalence, have attempted to develop typologies of equivalence, either focusingon the rank (word, sentence, text) at which level equivalence is said to obtain, or on thetype of meaning (denotative, connotative, pragmatic, etc.) (Baker 1997). In this article theviewpoints of translation scholars as regards “equivalence” will be taken into account.These theorists have studied equivalence in relation to translation process, using differentapproaches.Roman Jackobson (1959) is a figure who theorizes about equivalence. His study ofequivalence gave new impetus to the theoretical analysis of translation since he intro-duced the notion of “equivalence in difference”. On the basis of his semiotic approach tolanguage and his aphorism “there is no signatum without signum” (1959:232), he sug-gests three kinds of translation:• Intralingual (within one language, i.e. rewording or paraphrasing)• Interlingual (between two languages or translation proper)• Intersemiotic (between sign systems or transmutation)He goes on to examine the key issues of translation, notably, linguistic meaning andequivalence. He considers the problem of equivalence in meaning between words in dif-ferent languages. According to him (1959:114), there is no full equivalence betweencode-units. In his description, interlingual translation involves substituting messages inone language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language.The translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes. An example hegives is that of cheese in English, which is not identical to the Russian word syr, sincethe Russian code-unit does not include the concept of cottage cheese, therefore, the bestway is to expand the word in the TL. He acknowledges that “whenever there is deficien cy, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations,neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions”.It can be concluded that Jakobson’s theory is essentially based on his semioticapproach to translation according to which the translator has to recode the ST messagefirst and then she/he has to transmit it into an equivalent message for the TC.Vinay and Darbelnet (2000:83-93, quoted in Munday, 2001) identify two translationstrategies, “direct translation and oblique translation”. Borrowing, calque and literal transla-tion procedures are the procedures used for direct translation in cases where the items poseno real problem and can be easily relayed. However, there are cases in which literal transla-tion is not possible and, for this reason, the translator should avail himself of “oblique trans-lation”. It includes “transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation”.Vinay and Darbelnet view equivalence-oriented translation as a procedure which “repli-cates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording”(ibid.:90). They also suggest that if this procedure is applied during the translation process,it can maintain the stylistic impact of the SL text in the TL text. According to them, equiva-lence is therefore the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs, idioms,clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases and the onomatopoeia of animal sounds.Catford’s approach to translation equivalence clearly differs from that adopted byNida: Catford had a preference for a more linguistic-based approach to translation andthis approach is based on the ideas put forward by Firth and Halliday. The latter treat lan-guage as communication that operates functionally in context and on a range of differentlevels (e.g. phonology, graphology, lexis, grammar) and ranks (sentence, clause, group,word, morpheme).Catford proposed very broad types of translation in terms of three criteria:1. The extent of translation (full translation vs partial translation);2. The grammatical rank at which the translation equivalence is established (rank-boundtranslation vs. unbounded translation);3. The levels of language involved in translation ( total translation vs. restricted trans-lation).  
*(2) (PDF) Equivalence in Translation*. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348918810_Equivalence_in_Translation> [accessed Oct 03 2024].

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