

# A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF EQUIVALENCE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION

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**Abstract :** The Concept of Equivalence can be said to hold a central position in translation process. In spite of it is also rather controversial then the applicability of equivalence for the sake of convenience for the theoretical status. Among the translators are involving the translation process in nature, it depends upon the definitions or it may be as a theoretical views and applicability of the translating text. Therefore, Translation equivalence is debate from many translators regarding the obstacle to progress in translation and much more difficult task for every translator. The aim of the present paper to provide a critical study of the translation equivalence in field of translation by the translator's strategies such as Jakobson (1959), Nida and Taber (1969), Catford (1965), Popovic (1970), Koller (1979), Newmark (1981), Baker(1992) and Pym (1992). The above mentioned scholars theories are presented to provide a better understanding of the knowledge and how the concept established to setting the equivalence in source language into target language. Lost but not least that the usefulness of the concept of equivalence to the translation process varies according to the stance of the translators concerned on what they regard are the faithfulness in equivalence itself.

**IndexTerms - Concept of Equivalence, Translation theories, Source language, Target Language.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The process of translation has existed both linguistic and cultural transfer. As a discipline, however it began to develop in the twentieth century under the name of 'translation studies' which was proposed by James Holmes (1972). This term was widely accepted because of translation as a broad discipline shifting emphasis to neglected areas of translation such as interpreting and translator training. Perhaps, after the biggest contribution of James Holmes (1988) attempt to translation studies can be divided into two main areas; Pure and Applied. In this sense, Translation studies has a dual objectives of pure translation and description of the various translation phenomena as these found; and another one is extend to develop general principles through which these phenomena can be adequately explained.

Thus, the objective falls under the main concern the text format of descriptive translation studies (DTS) and the latter under the rubric of translation theory, both being subsections of pure translation studies.

## II. NATURE OF THE TRANSLATION EQUIVALENCE:

Every writer who have addressed the problem of the nature of translation include Catford (1964) and Pym (1992a) states that extra linguistic domain of object, persons, emotions, memories, history etc., (situation in Hallidayan views) features of which may o must achieve expression in a given language. Thus, Translation equivalence when STs and TTs are relateable to at least some of the same features of this extra linguistic reality, that is when ST and TT have approximately the same referents. Catford's approach has been criticized, but few alternatives have been put forward, the problem of pinning down the nature of linguistic meaning itself. Pym (1992a) avoids this difficulty by moving away from the strictly linguistic to view translation as a translation and equivalence as transaction and equivalence as equality of exchange value. Equivalence becomes a negotiable entity, with translators doing the negotiation.

## III. DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES:

Descriptive translation studies focus on three areas of research namely product oriented DTS text centred studies which aim at investigation for the existing translations, process – oriented studies which primarily interested in the mental processes that occur in translation, and functional – oriented translation studies which seek to describe the function of translations in the target socio cultural situation. The result of the descriptive translation studies can be applied to translation theory to develop either a general translation theory or partial translation theories restricted according to medium (human vs machine translation) area ( specific linguistic or cultural groups) rank (focusing on specific linguistic levels, such as that of the word or the sentence) text-type (dealing with specific genres, for instance literary vs business translation) time (dealing with particular periods of time) and problem (dealing with a specific translation problems, such as metaphor translation).

## IV. APPLIED TRANSLATION STUDIES:

The applied translation studies has a more practical orientation and is mainly concerned with translation training (referring to teaching methods, testing techniques and curriculum planning) , translation aids (referring to IT applications, dictionaries, translation software, on-line databases and the use of the internet), translation policy ( on the role both translators and translation in society, as well as on the place and role of translating in society) and translation criticism( mainly addressing issues of revision and evaluation of translations). Although James Holmes, Pym (1998) Vandepitte (2008) could be argued that offer a flexible separation of the various areas of translation studies, thus indicating the great potential of the discipline, since the discipline continues to evolve dynamically, thus revealing ever more of its interdisciplinary character as time goes on. Despite of its versatility, the concept of equivalence has always been an intriguing issue in the discipline of translation studies.

## V. THE CONCEPT OF EQUIVALENCE:

The concept of equivalence has been of particular concern to translation scholars it has been inextricably linked with both definitional and practical aspects of translating. Becoming an essential feature of translation theories in the 1960s and 1970s equivalence was meant to indicate that source text (henceforth ST) and target text (henceforth TT) share some kind of 'sameness' or 'merely possible matches'. the question is as to the kind and degree of sameness which have new born out the different kind of equivalence paradigm as it has conceptualized by thr such scholars are in this field, namely Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Jakobson (1959), Nida and Taber (1964), Catford. J.C (1965), House Juliane (1997), Baker (1992), and also last but not least Pym (2010).

## VI. A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF EQUIVALENCE:

**Case I: Vinay and Darbelnet (1958)** stated that a comparative stylistic analysis of the different translation strategies and procedures are used in English and Tamil. In English version, published in (1995) they distinguish between direct and oblique translation, the former referring to literal translation and the latter to free translation. Moreover, they propose seven procedures. The first three covered by direct translation and the remaining four by oblique translation. These procedures are: borrowing, claque, literal translation transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. In particular, argued the equivalence is viewed as a procedure in which the same situation is replicated as in the original but different wording is used. Thus, the procedure, it is claimed that the stylistic impact of the source - languages text can be maintain in the target-language text. Hence when dealing with proverbs, idioms and equivalence (cultural items of the language) for them sought at the level of sense and not image. For example, in English Idioms and metaphors too, to achieve the 'expressive identity' of SL text and TL text, the basic linguistic elements of the SL text can be ignored. At the same time, the translator has to remember the exact nature of the level of equivalence he has aimed for. The translation of idioms and metaphors too present a problem to the translator because they too are culture-bound. We have corresponding idiomatic expressions that render the same meaning as in 'clear as crystal' instead of 'padikam pool thelivaaka', 'smooth as silk' instead of 'pattupool menmai', 'deep as the ocean' instead of 'kadal pool aazham' and so on.

Furthermore, they consider as a necessary and sufficient condition for equivalent expressions between languages pairs to be acceptable to be listed in a bilingual dictionary 'as full equivalents', In spite of they realised the imaginary of such a statement by admitting that glossaries a d collections of idiomatic expressions are non exhaustive. In other words, the rendering of an equivalent of an expression in the SL text in a dictionary or glossary does not suffice or guarantee a successful translation since the context surrounding the term in question plays an equally important role in determining the translation strategy employed. They conclude by stating that the situations what determines the need for creating equivalences. So translators are encouraged to the situation of the source language in order to come up with a solution.

**Case II: Jakobson Roman (1959)** maintains that there are three kinds of translation that is, intralingual (rewording or paraphrasing with one language), interlingual (rewording or paraphrasing between two languages), and intersemiotic (rewording or paraphrasing between sign systems). It is interlingual translation that has been the focus of translation studies. When addressing the thorny problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages, he immediately stresses the fact that there can be no full equivalence between two words. In English to Tamil by saying that it is not identical for example, the word 'teacher' in English by saying that it is identical in female and male gender. The concept of the 'teacher' being include in Tamil 'aacciriyar' male and 'acciriyai' femal gender in both of the forms are used in different gender code. But in English used in the form 'teacher' is used in both gender' Nevertheless, English in terms 'widow' reveal the meaning, a women husband has died and who has not married again instead of the tamil word 'vithavai' in female gender but not identical equivalent in 'vithavan' in male gender.

On the closure observation of the views on equivalence, one may claim that there are some similarities between Vinay and Darbelnets theory of translation and Jakobson's , adopting a linguistic approach , they both argue that translation is possible despite cultural or grammatical differences between SL and TL. They both recognize the fact that the role of the translator should not be neglected and acknowledge some limitations of the linguistic approach, thus allowing the translator to also rely on other procedures that will ensure a more effective, the concept of the word meaning which could not identical in Tamil male gender classification, Therefore, Jakobson does not propose that translation is impossible to find out the correct form but rather pinpoint the difference in the form and terminological usage of the correct form but rather pin point the difference in the form and terminological usage of the language.

**Case III: Nida and Taber (1964)** contributions in the field of translation studies cannot be over stressed, with his two books in 1960s Towards a Science of Translating(1964) and co-authored The Theory and Practice of Translation attempting to give a more "Scientific" sense to translation. Borrowing theoretical concepts from semantics and pragmatics, and being influenced by Chomsky's generative-transformational grammar, Nida adopts a more systematic approach to exploring the field of translation studies. With regards to equivalence, Nida maintains that there are two basic types of equivalence one is formal equivalence and another one is dynamic equivalence. In particular Nida argues that in formal equivalence the TT resembles very much the ST in both form and content whereas in dynamic equivalence an effort is made to convey the ST message in the TT as naturally as possible. It could be argued that Nida is in favour of dynamic equivalence since he considers it to be a more effective translation procedure. This comes as no surprise given the fact that Nida was, at the time at which he proffered his views about equivalence, translating the Bible, and hence trying to produce the same impact on various different audiences he was simultaneously addressing. Nida's preference is more clearly stated in Nida and Taber (1969) since it is argued that dynamic equivalence in translation goes beyond correct communication of information.

Nida's works stated that the translation equivalence focusing on a receptor-based direction to the task of translating text. In spite of Nida's theory has been severely criticized for several reasons. In more details, According to Lefevere (1993) holds that equivalence is still focused on the word-level whereas how it is possible to measure the equivalent effect since no text can have the same effect or elicit the same response in two different cultures in different periods of time. Perhaps, the fiercest critic of Nida's work is Edwin Gentzler, Who dedicates a whole chapter to the 'science' of translation in contemporary Translation Theories using quotation marks around the 'science' perhaps in order to indicate his own sceptical views on the scientific virtue of translation methods. Gentzler overtly criticizes Nida for using the concept of dynamic equivalence in order to proselytize readers, regardless of their culture, to endorse the ideas of Protestant Christianity. Despite these criticisms, it could be concluded that Nida moved a long way forward from the position of his predecessors because he was able to produce a systematic and analytical procedure for

translators working with all kinds of text and, more importantly brought into the translation game, the reader; that is, the receptors as well as their cultural expectations.

**Case IV: Catford. J.C (1965)** stated that the main contribution in the field of translation studies lies in the introduction of his idea of 'types and shifts' of translation. Shifts refer to the changes that take place during the translation process. More specifically, Catford describes very broad types of translation according to three criteria. Firstly, full translation is contrasted with partial translation which differs according to the extent of translation. Secondly, total translation differs from restricted translation according to the levels of language involved in translation and thirdly, Catford distinguishes between rank-bound translation and unbounded translation, depending on the grammatical or phonological rank at which equivalence is established.

Since, the interest of this paper lies in equivalence; this study mainly concerned with the third type of translation, and will provide an analysis of the notion of shifts. With regard to translation shifts, Catford (1965) defines them as departures from formal correspondence when translating from the SL to the TL. Moreover, he maintains that there are two main types of translation shifts, that is, level shifts (where SL item at one linguistic level, for example, grammar, has a TL, equivalent at a different level, for instance lexis) and category shifts, which are divided into (a) structure-shifts involving change in grammatical structure (b) unit-shifts involving changes in rank, (c) class-shifts involving changes in class, and (d) intra-system shifts which occur internally when source and target language system share the same constitution but a non-corresponding term in the TL is selected when translating. Catford was severely criticized for holding a largely linguistic theory of translation and as the replacement of SL textual material by TL equivalent textual material, he does not mean equivalent in meaning.

**Case V: Popovic (1970)** posits the translator tries to find an equivalence from in TL for a given SL form to be a competent bilingual translator interchangeable in a given situation, hence equivalence can nearly always be established a sentence rank. He established the equivalence that is linguistic equivalence where by homogeneity on the linguist level of both ST and TT, word-for-word translation, Paradigmatic equivalence where the equivalence of the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis that is the elements of grammar and being a higher category than lexical equivalence. Stylistic equivalence where there is functional equivalence of the elements in both original and identity an invariant identical meaning. Textual equivalence where there is equivalence of the syntagmatic structure of a text that is equivalence of form and shape. Therefore this argue, It conclude, the finding translation equivalence may have been put into parameters that is lexical meaning, texture, sentence meaning, utterance meaning, Presupposition, style, cognition, structure and literary effect.

**Case VI: House, J (1997)** adopting pragmatic theories of language use, he came up with translation model in which the basic requirement for equivalent of ST and TT is that original and translation should match one another in function. This function should be achieved by employing equivalent pragmatic mean. The translation is only, therefore, considered to be adequate in quality if it matches the 'textual' profile and function of the original. In more detail, carrying out contrastive German-English discourse analyses, House has distinguished between two basic types of translation, namely overt translation and covert translation. As the term itself denotes, an overt translation points to a TT that consists of elements that 'betray' that it is a translation. On the other hand, a covert translation is a TT that has the same function with the ST since the translator has made every possible effort to alleviate cultural differences, In conclusion, it could be argued that House's theory seems more flexible than Catford's since it incorporates the pragmatic aspect of translation by using authentic example.

**Case VII: Koller. F (1979)** One of the most prominent German scholars working in the field of translation studies is Werner Koller, Koller's (1979) 'Introduction into the Science of Translation' is a detailed examination of the concept of equivalence and its linked term correspondence. In particular, correspondence involves the comparison of two language systems where differences and similarities are described contrastively, whereas equivalence deals with equivalent items in specific ST-TT pairs and contexts.

In an effort to answer the question of what is equivalent to what, Koller (1979) distinguishes five different types of equivalence: (a) denotative equivalence involving the extra linguistic content of a text, (b) connotative equivalence relating to lexical choices, (c) text-normative equivalence relating to text-type (d) pragmatic equivalence involving the receiver of the text or message, and finally, (e) formal equivalence relating to the form and aesthetics of the text. Having identified different types of equivalence, Koller (1979) goes on to argue that a hierarchy of values can be preserved in translation only if the translator comes up with a hierarchy of equivalence requirements for the target text. Although the hierarchical order in of equivalences is open to debate, Koller's contribution to the field of translation studies is acknowledged for bringing into translators attention various types and ways in which the then fashionable desideratum of equivalence may be achieved.

**Case VIII: Newmark. P (1981)** 'Approaches to Translation and A textbook of Translation (1988) do not aim to promote any monolithic translation theory but rather attempt to describe a basis for dealing with problems encountered during the translation process. More specifically, Newmark replaces Nida's terms of formal and dynamic equivalence with semantic and communicative translation respectively. The major difference between the two types of translation proposed by Newmark is that semantic translation focuses on meaning whereas communicative translation concentrates on effect. In other words, semantic translation looks back at the ST and tries to retain its characteristics as much as possible. Its nature is more complex, detailed and there is also a tendency to over-translate. On the other hand, communicative translation looks towards the needs of the addressees, thus trying to satisfy them as much as possible. In the respect, communicative translation tends to under-translate; to be smoother, more direct and easier to read. Hence, in semantic translation a great emphasis is placed on the author of the original text whereas communicative translation is meant to serve a larger readership. Moreover, Newmark (1981) strongly believes that literal translation is the best approach in both semantic and communicative translation. However, he is careful to note that when there is a conflict between the two forms of translation, then communicative translation should be favoured in order to avoid producing an abnormal, odd-sounding or semantically inaccurate result, in order to illustrate his point, he uses the example of the common sign in tamil 'naaikal jaakirathai' instead of English 'as beware the dog,' semantically 'as dog that bits' ! and ' bad dog'! in Tamil naai kadikkum' ' ketta naai' ! so that the message is communicated effectively.

**Case IX: Baker. H (1992)** addresses the vexing issue of equivalence by adopting a more neutral approach when she argues that equivalence is relative notion because it is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors. In particular, the chapters of her book 'In Other Words', structured around different kinds of equivalence, that is, at the level of word, phrase, grammar, text and pragmatics. Hence, terms such as grammatical, textual and pragmatic equivalence come up in more detail, a distinction is made between word-level and above-world-level equivalence. Adopting a bottom-up approach, Baker acknowledges the importance of individual words during the translation process, since the translator looks firstly at the words as single units in order to find their

equivalent in the TL. Baker defines the term word referring to its complex nature since a single word can sometimes be assigned different meanings in different languages. Consequently, parameters such as number, gender, and tense should be taken into consideration when translating a word.

Grammatical equivalence refers to the diversity of grammatical categories across languages and the difficulty of finding an equivalent term in the TT due to the variety of grammatical rules across languages. In fact, she stresses that differences in grammatical structures may significantly change the way the information or message is carried across. As consequences, the translator may be forced to add or delete information in the TT because of the lack of specific grammatical categories. Some of the major categories that often pose problems for translators are number, voice, person, gender, tense and aspect. On the other hand, textual equivalence refers to equivalence that may be achieved between a ST and TT in terms of cohesion and information.

Baker argues that the feature of texture is of immense importance for the translators since it facilitates their comprehension and analysis of the ST and helps them to produce a cohesive and coherent text in the TL. The translator's decision to maintain (or not) the cohesive ties as well as the coherence of the SL text mainly rests on three main factors; the target audience, the purpose of the translation and the text type. Finally, pragmatic equivalence deals mainly with implicature. Baker argues that the term implicature is used to refer to what is implied and not to literal meaning. In other words, the focus of interest is not on what is explicitly said but what is intended or implied in a given context. The role of the translator is to work out the meaning of implicatures if these exist in the ST and transfer them to the extent that this is possible. The primary aim of the translator should be to recreate the intended message of the SL in such a way so that it becomes accessible and comprehensible to the target audience. Baker's contribution to the field of translation studies is widely acknowledged on account of her providing a systematic approach to training translators through the elaboration of specific strategies that can be used to deal with the numerous translation problems translators encounter daily. Hence, by addressing both theoretical and practical issues of the translation, on the basis of sound.

**Case X: Pym. I (2010)** makes his own contribution to the concept of equivalence by pointing out that there is no such thing as perfect equivalence between languages and it is always assumed equivalence. In particular, for his views equivalence is a relation of 'equal value' between an ST segment and a TT segment and can be established on any linguistic level from form to function. He goes on to distinguish between natural and directional equivalence. Natural equivalence exists between languages prior to the act of translating, and secondly, it is not affected by directionality. On the other hand, theories of directional equivalence give the translator the freedom to choose between several translation strategies which are not dictated by the ST. Although there are usually many ways of translating, the strategies for directional equivalence are reduced into two opposing poles; one adhering to SL norms and the other to TL norms. Perhaps, the most important assumption of discretionary equivalence is that it involves some kind of asymmetry since when translating one way and creating an equivalent does not imply the creation of the same equivalent when translating another way.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the translation equivalence could be argued that many translation theories are based on two opposing ways of translating. For instance, Nida distinguishes between formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark, between semantic and communicative translation. Catford, between formal correspondence and textual equivalence, House, between overt and covert translation and Pym, between natural and directional equivalence. These views of equivalence soon faded away and more attractive translation paradigms came to the forefront. Contrary to linguistic-oriented approaches to translation which assume that the source text occupies a supreme position and that it is considered to be of crucial importance in determining not only the translation process but also the extent to which it has been successful, target-oriented approaches view the source text as the point of departure for the translation process and mostly focus on the cultural, historical and socio-political factors surrounding translation, thus looking at it as a culture-bound phenomenon. Despite of its shortcomings, it should be stressed that equivalence is still one of the pivotal definitely axes of translation since it functions as a reminder of the central problems a translator encounters during the translation process. Therefore this argues, It concludes, the finding translation equivalence may have been put into parameters that is lexical meaning, texture, sentence meaning, utterance meaning, Presupposition, style, cognition, structure and literary effect.

For instance, Robert Frost's Poem 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' is used as follows,

*The Woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

**Lexical Meaning:** The meaning of the word 'sleep' literally means 'sleeping' figuratively it means death.

**Texture:** The texture of the poem is philosophical. The poet stops by the woods on a snowy being and contemplates on the beauty of Nature.

**Sentence Meaning:** Nature fulfils its duty by spreading beauty around it; likewise he has to perform his duties, before he dies. The words 'miles to go' refer to the 'span of life time' and man's duties.

**Utterance Meaning:** 'sleep' the poet has to travel miles together before he goes to sleep.

**Presupposition:** Considering 'death as a presupposed meaning of 'sleep'.

**Style:** simple yet contemplative style..

**Cognition:** the total understanding of the poem leads to the interpretation of the word 'sleep'.

**Structure:** the structure is a rhyming lyric.

**Literary effect:** The word 'sleep' is rhyming and the repetition of the word stresses the literary effect and potentiality of the word 'sleep'.

The above nine factors help to improve the communicative value of the SL text into TL text.

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