Types of Equivalence

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Since Cicero and Horace the debate around word-for-word rendering, i.e. literal translation, and sense-for-sense rendering, i.e. free translation, has been raging. In the twentieth century, modern linguists, such as Jakobson (1959), Nida (1964), Catford (1965), House (1977), Newmark (1981), to mention but some, have shifted the focus of attention towards modern linguistic concepts, such as meaning and equivalence in an attempt to systemize analyses of translation (cf. Munday 2008: 36).

Types of Equivalence

To begin with, Roman Jakobson (1959/1992: 145) in his essay *'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'* argues that there are three types of translation:

1- **Intralingual translation** or *rewording*: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language", i.e. replacing certain lexical items, expressions or phrases by means of other lexical items, expressions or phrases of the same language, as in replacing the lexical item *'purchase'* with *'buy'*.

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2- **Interlingual translation or translation proper**: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language", i.e. translating certain lexical items, expressions or phrases from one language into another. For example, when the lexical item 'purchase' is translated into يشتري , it is then an example of interlingual translation.

3- **Intersemiotic translation or transmutation**: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system", i.e. it is an interpretation activity from a non-linguistic communication system to a linguistic one. For instance, when you see 'the red light' while driving, and you stop, it is an intersemiotic translation.

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Jakobson (1959/1992: 154-147) then moves on to discuss issues, such as equivalence and meaning. He argues that optimal equivalents, i.e. full equivalents, hardly exist between languages. This is because these linguistic units (i.e. the SL linguistic unit and the TL linguistic unit) belong to different linguistic systems, i.e. languages, and languages normally morphologize, lexicalize, phraseologize, idiomaticize, syntacticize, contextualize, pragmaticize and culturalize world experiences differently.

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By way of explanation, let us consider the meaning of the lexical item 'heavy' (in English) along with its established equivalents (in Arabic) in terms of collocation:

e.g. heavy rain = مطر غزير

e.g. heavy meal = وجبة دسمة

e.g. heavy wind = ريح شديد

e.g. heavy smoker = مدخن نهم/مفرط

e.g. heavy industries = صناعات ثقيلة

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ضرَبَ القلبُ تحرَّك، نبض

ضرَب الجُرحُ/ ضرَب الضِّرسُ: اشتدَّ ألمه،

ضرَب في الماء: تحرَّك وسبح فيه

ضرَبَ الزَّمانُ: مضَى القرن الذي ضرَب مليء بكبار الحوادث

ضرَبَ بين النَّاسِ: أفسد بينهم

ضرَبَ شيئًا/ ضرَبَ بالشَّيء/ ضرَبَ على الشَّيء/ ضرَبَ في الشَّيء: أصابه وصدمه

ضرب اللهُ قلوبَ بعضهم ببعض: سلَّط كلاًّ منهم على الآخر،

القوَّة الضَّاربة: مجموعة الوسائل العسكريَّة الحديثة،

ضرَب آباطَ الأمور: عرف بواطنَها،

ضرَب الأرزَ: قشَّره،

ضرَب البيضَ بالدَّقيق: خلطه ومزجه به،

ضرَبَ الرجُلُ في الأرض: ذَهَبَ وأَبْعَدَ

ضرَب التَّاجرُ على يد شريكه: عقد معه البيعَ،

ضرَب الجرسَ: دقَّه، ضغط عليه ليرنّ،

ضرَب النَّومُ على أذنه: غلبه، نام،

ضرَب بالأمر عُرْضَ الحائط: أهمله، أعرض عنه، احتقره،

ضرَب بذقنه الأرضَ: أطرق استحياء، خاف وبكى،

ضرَب به الأرضَ: ألقاه عليها،

ضرب بيده إلى الشَّيء: أهوى بها وأشار،

ضرَبتِ العقربُ الولَدَ: لدغته،

ضرَب رقبتَه/ ضرَب عنقَه: قتله بالسيف،

ضرَب عُصْفورين بحجرٍ واحد: حقَّق هدفين بعمل واحد،

ضرَب على الآلة الكاتبة: كتب عليها،

ضرَب على الآلة الموسيقيَّة: طرق وعزف عليها،

ضرَب على الرِّسالة: ختمها،

ضرَبَ الشيءُ ضرَبَ ضَرْبًا، وضَرَبانًا: تحَرَّكَ

ضرَبَ العِرْقُ: هاجَ دَمُه واختلَجَ

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

Formal equivalence or correspondence pays special attention to "the message itself, in both form and content", (1964: 159). To put this differently, formal equivalence is **text-/author-oriented**, representing the closest equivalent of SL elements. Typically, formal equivalence "distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard" (Nida and Taber 1969/1982: 201).

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, is based upon "the principle of equivalent effect", i.e. the translation should produce on the TL reader the same effect that the ST produced on its readers. In other words, it is **reader-oriented**, paying much attention to the linguistic and stylistic patterns of the TL at the expense of the message *per se*.

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

Believing that in translation the change in the form cannot be avoided at any rate, Nida and Taber (1982: 200) list three rules that need to be followed by translators in order to achieve a faithful translation. They are:

1- the rules of back transformation in the SL;

2- the rules of contextual consistency in the transfer; and

3- the rules of transformation in the receptor language.

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

For Nida (1964: 164), there are four basic requirements of a successful translation. They are:

1- making sense;

2- conveying the spirit and manner of the original;

3- having a natural and easy form of expression; and

4- producing a similar response.

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

It is worth noting here that these requirements of a successful translation are reader-oriented except the second one, i.e. reflecting the spirit and manner of the original, which is text-/author-oriented.

Taking into account the macro context in which Nida was dealing with the translation phenomenon, i.e. the translation of the Bible, one can readily observe that Nida is in favour of dynamic equivalence.

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

Examples:

رحلة الألف ميل تبدأ بخطوة

Formal Equivalence: A journey of a thousand miles starts with a step

Dynamic Equivalence: From small beginnings comes great things

يزيد الطين بلة

Formal Equivalence: Add wetness to the mud

Dynamic Equivalence: Add fuel to fire/add insult to injury

الصراحة راحة

Formal Equivalence: Frankness is peace of mind

Dynamic Equivalence: Speak the truth and shame the devil

Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence Vs Dynamic Equivalence

Examples:

لا ناقة لي فيها ولا جمل

Formal Equivalence: I have nor a male nor a female camel in it

Dynamic Equivalence: I have no horse in this race

الصديق وقت الضيق

Formal Equivalence: A true friend is for the time of trouble

Dynamic Equivalence: A friend in need is a friend indeed

الدراهم مراهم

Formal Equivalence: Money is medicine

Dynamic Equivalence: Ready money is ready medicine

The End