

TYPES AND LEVELS OF EQUIVALENCE AND ADEQUACY IN TRANSLATION: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Translation represents one of the most ancient yet methodologically challenging forms of human intellectual activity. Despite substantial progress in translation studies, the conceptual boundaries between “equivalence” and “adequacy” continue to generate debate, particularly within Uzbek, Russian, English, and comparative translation contexts. The aim of this article is to provide a concise theoretical examination of the types and degrees of equivalence and adequacy, drawing on classical and contemporary sources. The study synthesizes linguistic, cultural, pragmatic, and functional dimensions of translation, demonstrating how communicative purpose and contextual factors shape translation outcomes. The analysis argues that equivalence and adequacy function as interrelated yet distinct categories: equivalence addresses semantic similarity, while adequacy reflects the appropriateness and communicative success of the translation. The findings contribute to refining theoretical models used in translation pedagogy and quality assessment within modern translation studies.

Keywords: translation theory, equivalence, adequacy, semantic correspondence, communicative function, linguistic transformation.

Introduction

In the context of globalization, translation has acquired unprecedented importance for international cooperation, cross-cultural communication, and scientific exchange. These developments require translators not only to possess linguistic competence but also to navigate complex cultural, pragmatic, and stylistic dimensions. One of the most debated problems in translation theory is the correlation between the source text and the target text—traditionally conceptualized through the categories of **equivalence** and **adequacy**.

Although both terms have been thoroughly addressed by scholars such as Barhudarov, Vinogradov, Komissarov, Nida, Neubert, Fedorov, Shveitser, Turi, Musayev, and others, their practical application—particularly in Uzbek–English and Uzbek–Russian translation—remains theoretically complex. This article aims to clarify these categories based on a systematic review of linguistic literature.

Literature Review

Early Soviet scholars (Barhudarov, Vinogradov, Fedorov) developed structural and semantic models of translation equivalence, focusing primarily on linguistic parameters. Western scholars—especially E. Nida, K. Reiss, and H. Vermeer—shifted the paradigm toward functionalism, emphasizing communicative effect and Skopos theory.

In Uzbek scholarship, Musayev, Teshabayeva, Yuldoshev, and Pardayeva have contributed significantly to contextualizing equivalence and adequacy within national linguistic and cultural frameworks. Their studies highlight that translation is not simply a linguistic substitution but a culturally and cognitively conditioned process.

Building on these foundations, modern translation studies integrate linguistic, functional, cultural, pragmatic, and cognitive perspectives, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

Conceptual Framework: Equivalence in Translation

Definition and Theoretical Basis

Equivalence refers to the degree of similarity between the source and target texts at different levels—semantic, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and cultural. Absolute equivalence is unattainable; however, translation aims to preserve the essential meaning, function, and communicative effect of the original.

Types of Equivalence

1. **Lexical equivalence** – direct correspondence of words and expressions. 2. **Grammatical equivalence** – preservation of syntactic and morphological structures. 3. **Semantic equivalence** – accurate transfer of meaning, even with structural changes. 4. **Pragmatic equivalence** – reproduction of communicative intent and effect. 5. **Cultural equivalence** – adaptation of culturally specific elements for the target audience.

Degrees of Equivalence (Musayev) Musayev identifies five levels: minimal equivalence, contextual equivalence, partial structural equivalence, high equivalence, complete equivalence (when lexical, syntactic, and stylistic features closely match).

Komissarov's Five-Level Model. Komissarov distinguishes equivalence at the level of: communicative purpose, situation description, utterance meaning, message, linguistic signs. This structure shows that equivalence is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to lexical similarity alone.

Conceptual Framework: Adequacy in Translation

Definition

Adequacy describes the quality of translation decisions within specific communicative conditions. A translation may be considered adequate if it:

fully conveys the meaning of the original, is culturally and contextually appropriate, produces the intended effect on target readers, adheres to stylistic and genre conventions.

Adequacy vs. Equivalence

Several scholars (Reiss, Vermeer) argue that adequacy relates to translation purpose (Skopos), whereas equivalence refers to interlingual semantic correspondence. Adequacy is thus a broader and more functional concept.

Levels of Adequacy (Kheresa)

Informational adequacy – transfer of factual content.

Evaluative adequacy – preservation of the author’s attitude and tone.

Directive adequacy – ability to influence reader behavior.

Systemic adequacy – integration of the text into the target cultural/linguistic system.

Adequacy in Artistic Translation

In literary translation, cultural, emotional, and aesthetic components often take precedence over literal linguistic correspondence. A text may be stylistically adequate even when it does not exhibit formal equivalence.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that equivalence and adequacy, while interconnected, address different aspects of translation: Equivalence focuses on what is preserved (semantic content). Adequacy focuses on how effectively it is preserved (functional success).

High-quality translation requires both: **semantic similarity** (equivalence)

contextual appropriateness (adequacy) The relationship between the two depends on text type, translation purpose, and cultural context. For example, technical texts require precision and structural equivalence, while literary texts require aesthetic and emotional adequacy.

Conclusion.

Equivalence and adequacy remain central categories in translation theory. Equivalence reflects semantic and structural relations between texts, whereas adequacy reflects the functional appropriateness and communicative value of translation. Their interplay shapes translation quality and determines the translator’s strategic choices.

Understanding these categories is essential for translation pedagogy, quality assessment, and the development of national translation standards. The study contributes to ongoing theoretical discussions and offers a framework applicable to Uzbek, Russian, English, and other linguistic contexts.

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