

The Concept of Equivalence in Translation Studies

The concept of equivalence, which has an important role in Translation Studies, is a broad concept. Although this concept is defined in terms of the relations between source and target texts by some scholars such as Nida and Jakobson, there are also some scholars, such as Shell Hornby, who deny it and regard it harmful. In this paper, different approaches to the concept of equivalence in Translation Studies will be scrutinized.

Scholars such as Eugene Nida and Roman Jakobson work on linguistically oriented theories of translation and so they define translation equivalence based on word-level, sentence-level, text-level or the effect it creates. Jakobson's notion of equivalence deals with equivalence mostly on word and sentence level. In his article 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', Jakobson approaches the notion of equivalence from a linguistic point of view and asserts that equivalence in meaning is problematic because each and every language is different from each other. In Jakobson's words, "Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and pivotal concern of linguistics."

Nida, who introduced the issue of cultural differences in Translation Studies for the first time, believes that equivalence is not possible between different languages. Nida focuses on not only creating word or sentence equivalence, but also equivalent effect on the target side. Nida divides equivalence in two sections as dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. According to Nida, "Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content." Concerning dynamic equivalence, Nida mentions that this type is based on "the principle of equivalent effect" in which "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptor and the message."

Moreover, Koller's 'Introduction into the Science of Translation' includes detailed information about the concept of equivalence. Koller mentions five different types of equivalence; denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic, and formal equivalences.

As it is seen, in the 1960s and 1970s, equivalence indicated that source text and target text share some kind of sameness. Still, at the beginning of 1980s there was a shift from linguistic approaches to functional approaches. The theories of Reiss and Vermeer could be taken as the beginning of a new era in Translation Studies. According to Reiss, translation is a communicative act and equivalence must be sought at the level of where communication is achieved. Here it is clear that Reiss is still in search of an equivalence of some sort; however,

Vermeer's theory proposes a complete independency from the source and gives priority to the purpose - namely 'skopos' – in translation instead of giving priority to 'equivalence'. Thanks to 'Skopos Theory', target text gains an autonomous character and has its own textual potentials. Vermeer puts that any translation does not always have to be equivalent to a source text because formulation of the content and the goals of the source and target texts may diverge from each other. As a result, in some translations, equivalence may not be in question according to Vermeer's point of view.

Toury changes the concept of equivalence from prescriptive definitions to descriptive ones. He states that equivalence is a feature of all translations, simply because they are thought to be translations, no matter what their linguistic and aesthetic quality is. He also says that "It is norms that determine the (type and extent of) equivalence manifested by actual translations."

Snell-Hornby is one of the important scholars who reject the notion of equivalence as a basic concept in Translation Studies. In her book 'Translation Studies, an Integrated Approach' she asserts that previous approaches to the notion of equivalence have not "provided any substantial help in furthering translation studies." She is in the idea that the concept of equivalence is "imprecise and ill defined".

In his essay *The Concept of Equivalence in Translation*, Van den Broek states; "We must, by all means, reject the idea that the equivalence relation applies to translation." Broek also redefines the term equivalence by the concept of "true understanding".

In conclusion, approaches to the concept of equivalence have changed over the years. As it can be seen, the definitions and applicability of this concept within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy. In this paper, the concept of equivalence has been evaluated and discussed in line with the approaches from different perspectives.

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