

**Diana Oțăt**

**Insights and Functional Models  
in Translation Theory and Practice.  
A Resource Book**



**Editura Universitaria  
Craiova, 2014**

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**Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României**

**OȚĂT, DIANA**

**Insights and functional models in translation theory and practice : a resource book / Diana Oțăt. - Craiova : Universitaria, 2014**

Bibliogr.

ISBN 978-606-14-0874-0

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**DA** – Discourse Analysis

**CTS** – Corpus-based Translation Studies

**SC** – Source Culture

**SL** – Source Language

**ST** – Source Text

**TC** – Target Culture

**TL** – Target Language

**TS** – Translation Studies

**TT** – Target Text

## 1. TRANSLATION BACKGROUND

### Task 1.A



Look at Figure 1.1 below and try to track down the etymology of the term “translation”

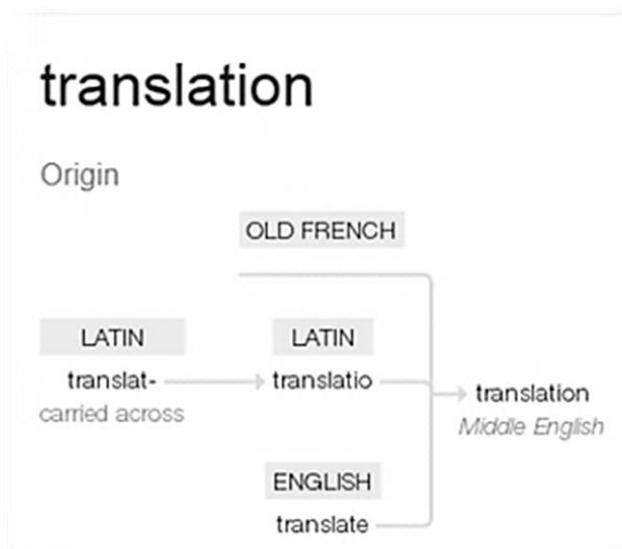


Figure 1.1 Etymology of the term “translation”

### Task 1.B



Read the term definition below, look up for an explanation into Romanian explanatory/etymologic dictionaries

*trānslātiō* - from Latin - (“transfer”), from trans- (“across”), + lātiō (“carrying”), from lātus, perfect passive participle of irregular verb ferō (compare transfer), + noun of action suffix -iō

<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/translation>

*“Translators barely receive a mention, but they deserve a Nobel Prize”.*  
Daniel Weissbo

Task 1.C



Discuss in small groups and provide an interpretation regarding the interdisciplinary meaning of “translation”:

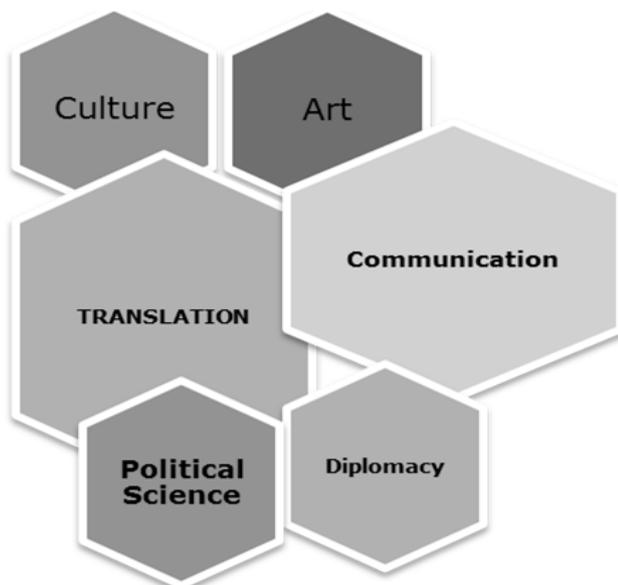


Figure 1.2 Meaning of Translation

**1.1 The diachronic perspective on the development of translation**

Task 1.1.A



Think of the *Tower of Babel* – how would you relate it to the dawn of translation?

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Task 1.1.B



Match the columns 1-4 with their corresponding explanations

St Jerome's approach to translating the Greek *Septuagint Bible* into Latin affected later translations of the Scriptures. *Non verbum de verbo sed sensum de senso!*

|    |   |    |  |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1. | Cicero, Horace 1 <sup>st</sup> Century BC | a. | Translation – an element of language learning (in modern language courses)<br>the grammar-translation method<br>classical languages + M. Luther (modern languages)<br>– translation exercises<br>• a means of learning foreign language (reading skills)<br><br>• change of attitude with the rise of the direct method (spoken lang.) - NO translation in the classroom |
| 2. | Since the 1970s                           | b. | The practice of translation was discussed by Cicero and Horace (first century BCE)   |
| 3. | Until the late 1960s                      | c. | battleground of conflicting ideologies in western Europe: literal vs. free (word or sense; <i>interpres ut orator</i> )  |
| 4. | St Jerome 4 <sup>th</sup> Century AD      | d. | TR developed into an academic discipline   |

The translation of the Bible was to be – for well over a thousand years and especially during the Reformation in the sixteenth century – the battleground of conflicting ideologies in Western Europe

## 1.2 A synchronic approach to translation studies in the new millennium

### Task 1.2.A



Think of translation as a cause-effect relationship, which would be then the “*raison d'être*” of translation?

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The aim of translation is to achieve maximal equivalence between ST and TT.



Task 1.2.B



Ever since 1970s *equivalence* can be said to be the central issue in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused intense dissensions. Admittedly, many different theories of the concept of *equivalence* have been put forward within this field in the past fifty years.

Read closely the résumé below on the theory of equivalence as postulated by some of the most innovative theorists in the field of translation and establish a chronological evolution of this concept. Search for ideological similarities and differences of the theories listed below.

### **1. Vinay and Darbelnet - equivalence in translation**

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:342) view equivalence-oriented translation as a procedure which “replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording”. The authors postulate that equivalence is the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs, idioms, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases and the onomatopoeia of animal sounds.

With regard to equivalent expressions between language pairs, Vinay and Darbelnet claim that they are acceptable as long as they are listed in a bilingual dictionary as “full equivalents” (ibid.:255). According to Vinay and Darbelnet, “the need for creating equivalences arises from the situation, and it is in the situation of the SL text that translators have to look for a solution” (ibid.: 255). Thus, even if the semantic equivalent of an expression in the SL text is quoted in a dictionary or a glossary, it is not enough, and it does not guarantee a successful translation.

### **2. Jakobson and the concept of equivalence in difference**

Roman Jakobson (2000) approaches translation theory as “equivalence in difference”. He envisages a semiotic approach to language asserting that “there is no signatum without signum” (200:232), consequently he suggests three kinds of translation:

- Intralingual (within one language, i.e. rewording or paraphrase)
- Interlingual (between two languages)
- Intersemiotic (between sign systems)

Jakobson claims that, in the case of interlingual translation, the translator makes use of synonyms in order to get the ST message across. This means that in interlingual translations there is no full equivalence between code units. According to his theory, “translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes” (ibid.233).

Grammatically, Jakobson acknowledges that languages may differ from one another to a greater or lesser degree, notwithstanding translation is possible, though the translator might face the problem of not finding a translation equivalent. The theorist claims that “whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions' (ibid.: 234).

### **3. Nida & Taber - formal correspondence vs dynamic equivalence**

Nida & Taber (1964/1982) argue that there are two different types of equivalence, i.e. *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*. Formal equivalence “focuses attention

on the message itself, in both form and content”, while dynamic equivalence is based on 'the principle of equivalent effect' (1982: 161).

Formal correspondence consists of a TL item which represents the closest equivalent of a SL word or phrase. Nida and Taber admit that there are not always formal equivalents between language pairs, thus suggesting that formal equivalents should be used wherever possible if the translation aims at achieving formal rather than dynamic equivalence. However, Nida & Taber (1982:201) themselves assert that “Typically, formal correspondence 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”.

Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same impact on the TC audience as the original wording did upon the ST audience. They argue that “Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful” (Nida & Taber 1982: 200).

The theory postulated by Nida & Taber is primarily oriented toward the message of the text, i.e. in its semantic quality. The focus will be on the message, which should remain clear in the target text.

#### **4. Catford - the introduction of translation shifts**

Catford (1965) theorizes a defence approach to translation equivalence based on the linguistic work of Halliday. Catford introduces the concepts of *types* and *shifts* in the field of translation theory. He classifies translation according to:

1. The extent of translation - full translation vs partial translation);
2. The grammatical rank at which the translation equivalence is established - rank-bound translation vs. unbounded translation;
3. The levels of language involved in translation - total translation vs. restricted translation).

Catford postulates that in rank-bound translation an equivalent is sought in the TL for each word, or for each morpheme encountered in the ST, whereas in unbounded translation, equivalences are not tied to a particular rank, thus equivalences might occur at sentence, clause levels. At text level, i.e. textual equivalence, occurs only on a particular occasion, thus Catford (1965: 28) implements it by a process of commutation, postulating that a translator is consulted on the translation of various sentences whose ST items are changed in order to observe “what changes if any occur in the TL text as a consequence”

Translation shifts are defined by Catford as “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL” (ibid.: 73). Catford argues that there are two main types of translation shifts, namely level shifts, where the SL item at one linguistic level (grammar) has a TL equivalent at a different level (lexis), and category shifts which are divided into four types:

1. Structure-shifts - a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT;
2. Class-shifts - a SL item is translated with a TL item which belongs to a different grammatical class, i.e. a verb may be translated with a noun;
3. Unit-shifts - involve changes in rank;
4. Intra-system shifts – “SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves

selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system” (ibid.: 80). For instance, when the SL singular becomes a TL plural.

### **5. House - overt and covert translation**

House (1977) approaches equivalence in terms of semantics and pragmatics, claiming that ST and TT should match one another in function. House postulates that it is possible to characterize the function of a text by determining the situational dimensions of the ST.

She introduces the concept of *overt* and *covert translations*. In an overt translation the TT audience is not directly addressed and there is no need at all to attempt to recreate a “second original” since an overt translation “must overtly be a translation” (ibid.: 189). On the other hand, a covert translation is the production of a text which is functionally equivalent to the ST. House also argues that in this type of translation the ST “is not specifically addressed to a TC audience” (ibid.: 194). The theory postulated by House is mainly based on authentic examples, the author uses complete texts and, more importantly, she relates linguistic features to the context of both source and target text.

### **6. Baker and the concept of *translation equivalence***

Baker (1992) provides a comprehensive approach to the concept of *equivalence*. She investigates the notion of *equivalence* at different levels, in relation to the translation process. Thus she distinguishes between:

- Word level and above word level equivalence – arguing that the translator should pay attention to a number of factors when considering a single word, such as number, gender and tense (ibid.: 11-12).
- Grammatical equivalence - regards grammatical categories across languages. Baker acknowledges that different grammatical structures in the SL and TL may cause remarkable changes in the way the information or message is carried across. These changes may induce the translator either to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself.
- Textual equivalence - the equivalence between a SL text and a TL text in terms of information and cohesion. Here the author states that it is up to the translator to decide whether or not to maintain the cohesive ties as well as the coherence of the SL text, based on three main factors, i.e. the target audience, the purpose of the translation and the text type.
- Pragmatic equivalence - implicatures and strategies of avoidance during the translation process. At this level the role of the translator is to recreate the author's intention in another culture in such a way that enables the TC reader to understand it clearly