

Linguistic and Equivalence-Based Models of Translation

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Abstract. *This article examines the translation theories centered on linguistics and equivalence by authors like Roman Jakobson, J.C. Catford, and Eugene Nida. Early translation theory mainly focused on language and equivalence, perceiving translation as a method of transmitting meaning across languages.*

Keywords: *formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, fundamental subjects, functional model, cultural model, cognitive model*

Introduction

Early translation theory was dominated by theories based on language and equivalency, which viewed translation as fundamentally a process of communicating meaning between languages through systematic correspondences. Some of the most well-known proponents of this approach include Roman Jacobson, J.C. Catford, and Eugene Nida that their theories formed the theoretical foundation for later functional, cultural, and cognitive models of translation. Their ideas are still particularly relevant in fields like science fiction, where accurate language, logical coherence, and terminological consistency are essential.

Main body

Roman Jakobson's Linguistic Theory of Translation is As a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle and a renowned linguist, Roman Jakobson translated using a structuralist and semiotic approach. In his pioneering 1959 work "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Jakobson distinguished three kinds of translation, defining it as the process of using new indications to interpret spoken signals.

1. Interlingual translation refers to accurate translation between languages.
2. Intralingual translation refers to rewording inside the same language.
3. Intersemiotic translation is the process of interpreting spoken signals through nonverbal systems.

Complete language equivalency is unachievable, according to Jakobson, especially because of variations in lexical systems, cultural semantics, and grammatical categories. However, he contended that imaginative language replacement, as opposed to rigorous word-for-word matching, might effectively transmit meaning.

When it comes to examining science fiction, Jakobson's paradigm is useful for this:
the translation of invented terminology,

semantic shifts in futuristic or speculative concepts,
the role of metaphor and symbolism in imagined worlds.

His recognition of the limits of equivalence anticipates later views that regard SF translation as a semi-creative act, where translators must reconstruct meaning within a new linguistic system.

Later perspectives that consider SF translation as a semi-creative effort in which translators must recreate meaning within a new linguistic system are foreshadowed by his understanding of the boundaries of equivalency.

A *Linguistic Theory of Translation*, written by J.C. Catford in 1965, is one of the most methodical attempts to explain translation only in terms of linguistics. Catford, who was influenced by structural linguistics, described translation as “the substitution of text in one language (SL) for equivalent text in another language (TL)” (Catford, 1965). When introducing the idea of translation equivalency, Catford made a distinction between:

Formal correspondence refers to the connections among linguistic concepts.

Textual equivalency, or real equivalency within certain texts.

Additionally, he recognised other categories of translation changes, such as:

level shifts (lexis ↔ grammar);

Changes in structure, class, unit, and intra-system categories.

Catford’s methodology is especially helpful in the translation of science fiction since it:

Examining grammatical and syntactic changes,

Finding regular changes brought about by variations between the source and target languages.

Keeping tales focused on technology coherent both logically and structurally.

Catford's method, however, has come under fire for paying too little attention to reader reaction, culture, and pragmatics—aspects that are crucial in science fiction works that deal with other civilisations and speculative ideologies

Eugene Nida and the Concept of Formal Equivalence. Translating the Bible first, Eugene Nida developed one of the most important equivalency-based frameworks in translation studies. The distinction between formal and dynamic equivalency was initially made by Nida in *Toward a Science of Translating*.

These are the primary objectives of formal equivalency:

Preserving the original text's content and organization, minimising the need for translators by maintaining grammatical structures, lexical units, and stylistic characteristics. According to Nida, formal equivalence is particularly appropriate when the exact wording, structure, or conceptual framework of the source text is of primary importance. In the context of science fiction translation, formal equivalence is especially relevant for:

Technical explanations and scientific descriptions.

Speculative systems that make sense.

Sections that call for accuracy, such as philosophical or conceptual ones. Formal equivalency, however, may lessen readability and emotional effect, especially if the target audience is unfamiliar with the original culture or genre traditions, Nida said.

Despite having different theoretical philosophies, Jakobson, Catford, and Nida all place a strong emphasis on language structure and equivalency. Their models offer useful resources for:

- making sure that terms are consistent,
- maintaining narrative and logical consistency,
- examining how translations change structurally.

However, the boundaries of merely language models are frequently exceeded by science fiction, a genre distinguished by world-building, neologisms, and cultural imagination. Consequently, equivalency-based methods work best when combined with functional, cultural, and cognitive models, enabling translators to strike a balance between precision and originality.

Conclusion

Analyzing equivalency-based linguistic theories of translation shows how important they are to the growth of contemporary translation studies. Together, Roman Jakobson, J. C. Catford, and Eugene Nida's writings defined translation as a methodical technique of conveying meaning based on linguistic equivalency and structure. Early methodological approaches for evaluating translation correctness, coherence, and consistency were offered by these experts by concentrating on the connections between source and destination languages.

By highlighting the intrinsic drawbacks of absolute equivalency, Jakobson's semiotic viewpoint offered a flexible interpretation of meaning transfer via various sign systems. A rigorous framework for recognizing grammatical and structural changes between languages was provided by Catford's linguistic model, while Nida's idea of formal equivalence placed an emphasis on adherence to conceptual and textual structure.

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