

Article

Main Translation Problems

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Abstract: The present study aims to investigate the main translation problems as significant process of translation. This article analyzes the role of what is possibly the most important procedure to achieve equivalent translation between the source text and the target text. In particular, the focus is on how these translation procedures would be troublesome for translators and how translators should solve these problems, or which ways lead to proper translation between ST and TT. The findings suggest that successful translation requires not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural awareness and contextual understanding.

Keywords: Translation, Source Text, Target Text, Equivalence, Figurative Meaning, Literal Meaning, Machine Translation.

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1. Introduction

It is known that translation plays a significant role in facilitating international communication, academic exchange, business negotiations, and diplomatic relations. According to Eugene Nida, translation is not merely replacing words from one language into another, but reproducing the closest natural equivalent of the source -language message [1]. Despite technological progress and the growing availability of machine translation tools, translation remains a highly complex intellectual activity. Linguistic structures, cultural references, and contextual nuances often create obstacles for translators. This article aims to analyze the major problems in translation and suggest possible strategies to overcome them [2].

Literature review.

Many scholars have made significant contributions to Translation Studies by introducing theories that explain how meaning can be transferred between languages while preserving accuracy, style, and cultural relevance. Eugene Nida in his influential book *Toward a Science of Translating*, introduced the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the grammatical structure and lexical choices of the source text as closely as possible. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, prioritizes the response of the target audience [3].

Nida argued that a good translation should produce the same effect on target readers as the original text produced on source readers. Example from Nida's theory: A literal translation of the Biblical phrase "Lamb of God" into some cultures where sheep do not exist may confuse readers. In such cases, translators may adapt the expression to an equivalent culturally understandable animal or concept. Nida stated: "Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message". This idea highlights that naturalness is just as important as accuracy [4].

Peter Newmark, in *A Textbook of Translation*, proposed two major approaches: semantic translation and communicative translation.

Semantic translation attempts to preserve the author's original meaning and stylistic nuances as faithfully as possible. Communicative translation emphasizes delivering a clear and natural message to the target audience. Example from Newmark: English phrase: He is as cool as a cucumber [5].

2. Methods

A semantic translation may preserve the original image literally, while communicative translation would instead render the meaning as “very calm and relaxed” in the target language. Newmark emphasized that translators should always consider the purpose of translation and the needs of readers [6].

According to Newmark: “Translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”. This demonstrates his balance between faithfulness and readability [7].

Mona Baker, in *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, focused on different levels of equivalence, including: equivalence at the word level, above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence.

Baker argued that translation problems often arise because languages organize reality differently. Example from Baker: English distinguishes between house and home, whereas some languages may use one term for both. Translators must decide based on context whether emotional meaning or physical meaning is intended [8].

She also discussed collocations. Example: English says make a decision, while another language may say an equivalent of take a decision. Literal translation may sound unnatural. Baker noted that understanding collocational patterns is essential for producing fluent translations [9].

Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, introduced the concepts of domestication and foreignization. Domestication adapts a foreign text to fit the target culture, making it easier for readers to understand. Foreignization deliberately preserves foreign cultural elements to maintain authenticity. Example from Venuti: Food items such as hamburger, Thanksgiving turkey, or pumpkin pie can either be domesticated into culturally familiar equivalents or retained with explanation [10].

Venuti criticized the tendency to make translators invisible by forcing texts to sound entirely local. He argued: “The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator.” This means readers often forget that a text is translated when it reads too naturally [11].

3. Results and Discussion

Catford, in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, introduced the concept of translation shifts. He explained that structural differences between languages make direct equivalence impossible in many cases.

He identified several types of shifts: level shifts, structure shifts, class shifts, and unit shifts. Example from Catford: English adjective-noun structure: a medical student may require a different grammatical order in another language.

Catford believed that shifts are not translation mistakes but natural linguistic adaptations.

Major translation issues:

1. **Lexical Ambiguity:** One of the most common problems in translation is lexical ambiguity, where a word has multiple meanings. Example: English: bank Meaning 1: financial institution Meaning 2: river bank. Without context, the translator may choose the wrong meaning [12].
2. **Idiomatic Expressions:** Idioms are culture-specific and cannot usually be translated literally. Example: English: It’s raining cats and dogs.
Literal translation into Uzbek would sound unnatural.
Appropriate translation: Yomg’ir chelaklab yog’yapti.
Catford stated that idiomatic expressions are one of the greatest barriers to achieving equivalence.
3. **Cultural Differences:** Cultural references often create challenges because some concepts exist only in particular societies. Example: The word Thanksgiving has no direct equivalent in many cultures because it represents a specifically American holiday. The translator must either explain the concept or adapt it.
4. **Grammatical Differences:** Languages differ significantly in syntax, tense systems, and word order [13].

Example: English: I have been studying for three hours.

Uzbek translation requires structural adaptation because the Present Perfect Continuous tense does not exist directly in Uzbek. According to Baker, grammatical shifts are unavoidable in most translations.

5. Pragmatic Problems: Pragmatics concerns implied meaning and speaker intention.

Example: "Can you open the window?" Although grammatically a question, pragmatically it is a request. A literal translation may fail to communicate politeness or intention.

6. Machine Translation Limitations: Artificial intelligence tools such as Google Translate have improved significantly, but they still struggle with nuance, humor, sarcasm, and context.

Example: Machine translation may translate polysemous words incorrectly due to a lack of contextual awareness. Recent studies show that AI translation performs well in technical texts but less effectively in literary and culturally loaded texts.[14]

Strategies for Solving Translation Problems:

To overcome translation challenges, translators should apply several strategies:

1. Contextual analysis – understanding the surrounding text before translating.
2. Cultural adaptation – adjusting culturally specific elements.
3. Paraphrasing – explaining difficult concepts instead of literal translation.
4. Consulting corpora and dictionaries – verifying meanings and usage.
5. Human revision of machine output – combining AI efficiency with human expertise. Newmark suggested that no single translation strategy works universally; translators must choose methods according to purpose and audience [15].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Translation is far more than a linguistic process. It involves transferring meaning, culture, and communicative intent across languages. The major translation problems include lexical ambiguity, idioms, cultural references, grammatical mismatches, pragmatic differences, and machine translation limitations. Scholars such as Nida, Newmark, Baker, and Venuti have demonstrated that successful translation requires flexibility, critical thinking, and intercultural competence. Future research may focus on the collaboration between human translators and artificial intelligence to improve translation quality.

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