Equivalence in Students' Translation Class

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to present whether and to what extent students find Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence useful in their translation class. The theoretical background of the article comprises the concept of equivalence as defined by scholars such as Catford, Newmark, Nida and Taber, Venuti, Bassnett, Vinay and Darbelnet, Hatim, Munday, to mention just a few. Additionally, Nida's contextual approach to translating is to be introduced. The practical application focuses on the analysis of findings derived from a questionnaire carried out among BA and MA students of the translation class at the University of Zielona Góra concerning Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence. Conclusions are offered at the end of the article based on the research.

Key words: equivalence, formal vs. dynamic equivalence by Nida, students' translation training, contextual approach to translation, students' questionnaire

1. INTRODUCTION

As equivalence constitutes a fundamental part of Translation Studies, it naturally plays an important role in students' translation training. In translation practice students instinctively search for equivalent language counterparts between the source and target texts, even without any systemic knowledge of the theory of translation, and consequently of the theory of equivalence. However, when equipped with some theoretical information concerning equivalence and the ability to discern between types of equivalence, students discover that the challenge of implementing the theory in practice may be simply difficult. What is the reason for that? Supposedly, the difficulty lies in the multitude of approaches to the notion of equivalence understood differently depending on a given scholar within the versatile scope of Translation Studies. This work is an attempt to gauge students' attitude towards Nida's dynamic and formal equivalence and its usefulness in their translation training. Nevertheless, equivalence as a theoretical notion should probably be introduced first.

2. EQUIVALENCE

In Translation Studies, it is generally agreed that the term *equivalence* seems canonical or even iconic. One may find multifarious definitions of the notion. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha describe it as follows:

> Equivalence is a central concept in translation theory, but it is also a controversial one. Approaches to the question of equivalence can differ radically: some theorists define translation in terms of equivalence relations (Catford 1965; Koller 1995; Nida and Taber 1969; Pym 1992, 1995, 2004; Toury 1980) while others reject the theoretical notion of equivalence, claiming it is either irrelevant (Snell-Hornby 1988) or damaging (Gentzler 1993) to translation studies (Baker and Saldanha 2011, 100).

As one may see this definition emphasizes the complexity of the notion and underlines its controversial nature which, from the students' point of view, does not make it easier to understand and implement in translation practice.

Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie define *equivalence* accordingly:

> A term used by many writers to describe the nature and the extent of the relationships which exist between SL and TL texts or smaller linguistic units. As such, equivalence is in some senses the interlingual counterpart of synonymy within a single language, although Jakobson's famous slogan "equivalence in difference" (1959/1966:233) highlights the added complications which are associated with it. The issues lurking behind the term are indeed complex and the concept of equivalence has consequently been a matter of some controversy; Hermans, for example, has described it as a "troubled notion" (1995:217). Part of the problem stems from the fact that the term is also a standard polysemous English word, with the result that the precise sense in which *translation* equivalence is understood varies from writer to writer. (2014, 49)

This definition seems to confirm the troublesome character of the notion as introduced by Baker and Saldanha adding to it the fact that the word *equivalence* is simply polysemous, and as it can be understood differently depending on the writer, it does not make the translation task any easier.

In *Key Terms in Translation Studies* one may find another definition: "equivalence is the term used to refer to the relationship existing between a translation and the original text, a relationship that has been observed by scholars from a wide variety of perspectives" (Palumbo 2009, 42). This definition refers to the aspect of a relationship between the source and target texts, as mentioned by Baker and Saldanha.

As Alicja Pisarska and Teresa Tomaszkiewicz have written, the term *equivalence* was introduced by Roman Jakobson in his article entitled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959) within which he discussed various aspects of translation (Pisarska, Tomaszkiewicz 1998, 172). In 1964 in his *Toward a Science of Translating*, Eugene A. Nida scrupulously explained the difference between his definitions of formal and dynamic equivalence, where the former was understood as that which "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" (Nida 1964, 159), whereas the latter was presented as one in which "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the

message" (Nida 1964,159). In other words, dynamic equivalence translation aims at "[…] evoking in the receptors responses which are substantially equivalent to those experienced by the original receptors" (Nida 1969, 28). Nida's dynamic equivalence is also known as functional equivalence. When dealing with Nida's dynamic / functional equivalence, Newmark's equivalent effect is often mentioned for whom the emphasis on naturalness in translation seems crucial (Newmark 1995, 48). In 1965 J. C. Catford presented his linguistic theory introducing the notion of *textual equivalence* understood as a piece of the source text which constitutes its language equivalent counterpart of the target text (Catford 1965, 27). Derived from Catford's model but extending it further, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) offered their own translation strategies including *equivalence* which may "refer to cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means" (see Munday 2006, 58).

Another approach to the notion of *equivalence*, viewed more from the perspective of context than form and meaning, was presented by Robert de Beaugrande (1978) for whom the whole text was the sample in question (see Hatim 2001, 31). *Equivalence* from the pragmatic point of view was discussed by Werner Koller (1995) who distinguished five types of equivalence (Koller 1979, 384-385).

In Translation Studies the term *equivalence* recurs in versatile contexts mentioned by various translation scholars, such as Susan Bassnett (1996, 23), Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday (2004, 253), Krzysztof Hejwowski (2007, 12), Jeremy Munday (2009, 185), to mention just a few, as the list is not exhaustive concerning translation scholars who operate the term *equivalence* on a daily basis.

3. PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

The practical part of the present paper comprises a case study carried out among BA and MA students of English translation class at the University of Zielona Góra. The project took place in May 2018. The students were asked to fill in a questionnaire consisting of fourteen questions. The questionnaire was completed anonymously by seventeen BA students and sixteen MA students. The questions concerned Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence from the point of view of students' translation practice.

3.1. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CASE STUDY

The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine students' attitude to Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence; its usefulness in students' translation practice. Based on the gathered data, one may gauge if and to what extent students find Nida's formal and/or dynamic equivalence helpful in their translation workshop and translation training. Hence, the case study objectives are the following:
1. to check students' ability to discern between Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence;
2. to gauge students' opinions as to what extent Newmark's equivalent effect contributes to transference of the message (on the basis of the scale 1-10, 1 – the least, 10 – the most);
3. to examine whether formal and/or dynamic equivalence contributes to naturalness and comprehensibility of the target text;

4. to establish in which text types formal and/or dynamic equivalence occurs most frequently;
5. to analyse which translation techniques / methods help in achieving equivalent effect in translation;
6. to investigate which equivalence (formal or dynamic) grants the translator freedom, convenience and requires creativity in translation;
7. to check which equivalence (formal or dynamic) requires more effort from the translator;
8. to examine which equivalence (formal or dynamic) is considered as potentially more successful in translation.

3.2. THE RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY

The results are presented in the following sections:
1. students' discernment of formal and/or dynamic equivalence;
2. equivalent effect vs. naturalness and intelligibility;
3. formal and/or dynamic equivalence vs. naturalness and comprehension;
4. text types vs. formal and/or dynamic equivalence;
5. translation techniques vs. formal and/or dynamic equivalence;
6. freedom, convenience, creativity and equivalence;
7. effort and equivalence;
8. success in translation and equivalence.

3.2.1. STUDENTS' DISCERNMENT OF FORMAL AND/OR DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

Pursuant to the collated data, students were asked to recognize either formal or dynamic equivalence by circling the correct answer in the following samples:

The source text	The target text Dynamic/formal equivalence
As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den (Bunyan 1994, 7).	Postępując drogą puszczy Światowej przyszedłem na jedno miejsce gdzie była Jaskinia (Bunyan 1764, 1).

The source text	The target text Dynamic/formal equivalence
On the first of September, 1651, I went on board a ship bound for London. Never any young adventurer's misfortunes, I believe began sooner, or continued longer than mine. The ship was no sooner gotten out of the Humber, but the wind began to blow, and the waves to rise in a most frightful manner (Defoe 1904, 5).	Dzień ten najokropniejszy życia mojego, był pierwszy Września 1651. Nie rozumiem, aby wędrownik, który rychlej jak ja nieszczęścia doznawać począł. Ledwie okręt z rzeki Humber na morze wyszedł, kiedy gwałtowny wiatr powstał, a morskie wały coraz ogromniejsze podnosić zaczął (Defoe 1769, 6-7).

Among the seventeen BA students the distribution of answers was the following: thirteen students circled the correct answers, (which is *formal equivalence* in Bunyan's sample and *dynamic equivalence* in Defoe's extract), three students circled the dynamic equivalence answer in the case of both samples, and one student did not circle any answers. Based on the collected data, one may notice that 76% of the BA students in question are able to recognize Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence, 18% of the BA students are capable of recognizing dynamic equivalence but are not able to identify the formal equivalence in the analysed fragment, and 6% of the BA students are not capable of recognizing either formal or dynamic equivalence.

Among the sixteen MA students the distribution of answers was as follows: thirteen students chose the correct answer, which constitutes 81%; two students circled the formal equivalence in both samples, which amounts to 13%; and one student circled the dynamic equivalence answer in both fragments, which makes up 6%.

3.2.2. EQUIVALENT EFFECT VS. NATURALNESS AND INTELLIGIBILITY

The following question concerned the equivalent effect: does a translator achieve the equivalent effect thanks to transference of the source text message into the target text that is natural and understandable to the reader? Students were asked to answer the question by choosing yes or no within a scale from 1 to 10 (1 – the least, 10 – the most).

In the group of BA students, all students chose yes; four of whom selected 10, two students – 9, three students – 8, four students – 7, two students – 6, one student- 5, one student – 4. As a result, 23% of the BA students completely agree that a translator achieves the equivalent effect thanks to transference of the source text message into a target text that is natural and understandable to the reader.

In the group of MA students, similarly to the BA students, all chose yes, out of whom five students – 10, three students – 9, four students – 8, two students – 7, one student – 5, one student – 4. Hence, 31% of the MA students definitely agree with the statement regarding the equivalent effect.

3.2.3. FORMAL AND/OR DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE VS. NATURALNESS AND COMPREHENSION

This section analyses students answers to the following questions: (1) to what extent should a translator be natural (so that the target text does not sound like a translation but like a piece of an authentic text)? And (2) application of which equivalence (formal / dynamic) can potentially ensure more naturalness in translation?

Among the BA students, in the case of question (1), eight of them chose 10, two – 9, six – 8, and one- 5. Consequently, 47% of the BA students are of the opinion that in a scale from 1 to 10, a translator should be totally natural so as to avoid sounding like a translation, but rather like a piece of an authentic text. When it comes to question (2), the distribution of answers was the following: three students – formal:1, dynamic: 10; formal: 5, dynamic: 9; formal: 3, dynamic: 10; formal: 6, dynamic: 8; formal: 4, dynamic: 8; formal: 5, dynamic: 9; formal: 5, dynamic: 10; formal: 2, dynamic: 8; formal: 6, dynamic: 6; formal: 4, dynamic: 6; formal: 6, dynamic: 8; formal: 6, dynamic: 8; formal: 3, dynamic: 10; formal: 2, dynamic: 9; formal: 4, dynamic: 10. As a result, one may

notice that 41% of the BA students believe that dynamic equivalence can potentially ensure greater naturalness in translation.

In the group of the MA students, question (1), four of them chose 10, three – 9, seven – 8, one – 7 and one – 5. Thus, 25% of the MA students think the translator should be totally natural. The distribution of answers in question (2) is the following: seven students believe that the application of dynamic equivalence only can ensure more naturalness in translation: 10, 10, 10, 8, 8, 8, 7, which amounts to 44%. The results of the remaining students are as follows: formal: 6, dynamic: 9; formal: 7, dynamic: 9; formal: 3, dynamic: 8; formal: 1, dynamic: 8; formal: 5, dynamic: 5; formal: 5, dynamic: 10; formal: 1, dynamic: 10; formal: 4, dynamic: 6; formal: 3, dynamic: 7.

3.2.4. TEXT TYPES VS. FORMAL AND/OR DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

This section refers to occurrence frequency of formal or dynamic equivalence in relation to a given text type. According to the BA students, in literary texts occurrence frequency of dynamic equivalence (in a scale from 1 to 10) is the following: 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, one student chose a formal equivalence of 8. When it comes to poetry, the results are distributed accordingly: dynamic equivalence – 1, 2, 3, 5, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 10, three students chose formal equivalences of 6, 8, 10. The journalistic writing results are the following: dynamic equivalence: 4, 5, 5, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, one student chose a formal equivalence of 8. In the case of audiovisual language transfer, the results are as follows: dynamic equivalence – 1, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9, 9, 9, two students chose formal equivalences of 5 and 8. The final text types in question were non-literary texts with the following results: dynamic equivalence – 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, three students decided to choose formal equivalences of 8, 8, 8. Based on the collected data, one may infer that 23% of the BA students believe that dynamic equivalence occurs most frequently in the translation of literary texts, 18% of them are of the opinion that it occurs most frequently in the translation of poetry, and 12% in the translation of journalistic writing.

The answers of the MA students are as follows: dynamic equivalence in literary texts: 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, one student chose a formal equivalence of 6. Dynamic equivalence in poetry: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, two answers concerned a formal equivalence of 8, 8. Dynamic equivalence in journalistic writing: 1, 2, 3, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 7, 8, 8, 9, three students chose formal equivalences of 6, 6, 9. Dynamic equivalence in audiovisual language transfer: 2, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 9, 9, 9, 10. Dynamic equivalence in non-literary texts: 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 10, one answer referred to a formal equivalence of 6. As a result, one may infer that 37% of the MA students are of the opinion that dynamic equivalence occurs most frequently in the translation of poetry, 12.5% of the MA students believe that the occurrence frequency of dynamic equivalence is highest in the translation of literary texts.

3.2.5. TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES VS. FORMAL AND/OR DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

This section deals with students' answers to the following question: which techniques/methods seem to be most useful in achieving the equivalent effect in

translation? The results of the BA students are distributed accordingly: domestication – 3, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10; foreignization – 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 10, 10; adaptation – 3, 5, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 10, 10, 10; borrowing – 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 8, 8, 10; calque – 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7; literal translation – 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Consequently, 23% of the BA students believe that domestication is the most useful in achieving the equivalent effect in translation, 18% that adaptation is the most useful, and 12% foreignization. By way of analogy, 29% of the BA students are of the opinion that literal translation is the least useful, and 23% that calque is the least helpful.

The answers of the MA students are as follows: domestication – 5, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 9, 10, 10, 10; foreignization – 1, 2, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 8; adaptation – 4, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9; borrowing – 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 8, 9; calque – 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7; literal translation – 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6. On the basis of the collected data, one may infer that 19% of the MA students find domestication to be the most useful strategy in achieving the equivalent effect in translation. 37% of the MA students believe the literal translation method is the least useful, and 19% of them are of the opinion that calque is the least useful.

3.2.6. FREEDOM, CONVENIENCE, CREATIVITY AND EQUIVALENCE

Among the group of seventeen BA students, the answers concerning dynamic equivalence in reference to freedom (in the scale from 1 to 10) were as follows: ten students chose 10, two students – 9, three students – 8, one student – 7, and one student – 1. Based on this data, one may deduce that 59% of the BA students believe that dynamic equivalence grants the translator the greatest freedom. When it comes to convenience in translation, the results were distributed accordingly: two students – 10, two students – 9, two students – 8, four students – 7, three students – 6, and four students – 5. Hence, 12% of the BA students find dynamic equivalence the most convenient type to be used by the translator. As regards creativity, the answers were as follows: seven students chose 10, four students – 9, four students – 8, one student – 5, and one student – 2. Thus, 41% of the BA students think that dynamic equivalence requires the most creativity from the translator.

The group of sixteen MA students yielded the following answers: eight students chose 10, three students – 9, four – 8, and one – 7. As a result, 50% of the MA students believe that dynamic equivalence grants the translator the greatest freedom in translation. With reference to convenience, the answers were as follows: four students – 10, one student – 9, three students – 8, two students – 7, one student – 6, one student – 5, one student – 3, and three students – 1. This results in 25% of the MA students believing that dynamic equivalence is the most convenient to be used by the translator. With reference to creativity, the following answers were obtained: nine students chose 10, four students – 9, one – 8, one – 7, and one – 5. Consequently, 56% of the MA students think that dynamic equivalence requires the greatest amount of creativity on the part of the translator.

3.2.7. EFFORT AND EQUIVALENCE

18% of the BA students were of the opinion that formal equivalence requires more effort from the translator than the dynamic one in line with the following answers: three students chose 10, one student – 9, four students – 7, three students – 6, three students – 4, two students – 3, one student – 1.

According to the MA students, dynamic equivalence requires more effort from the translator than formal equivalence as the following answers indicate: six students chose 10, three students – 9, three students – 8, one student – 7, one student – 5, and two students – 1, which amounts to 37%.

3.2.8. SUCCESS IN TRANSLATION AND EQUIVALENCE

Perhaps one of the most interesting questions was the attempt to gauge which equivalence (formal / dynamic) can potentially be more successful in translation[1]. The BA students provided the following answers: five students chose 10, two students – 9, six students – 8, two students – 7, one student – 6, and one student – 5. The collated data allows us to infer that 29% of the BA students believe that the application of dynamic equivalence can potentially guarantee success in translation.

The results of the MA students were as follows: six students chose 10, three students – 9, five students – 8, two students – 5. Hence, 37% of the MA students think that dynamic equivalence can be the most successful in translation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to examine students' attitude towards Nida's dynamic and formal equivalence and its usefulness in the students' translation training.

On the basis of the analysis regarding the questionnaire carried out among the BA and MA translation students at the University of Zielona Góra, the following conclusions may be inferred:

-   76% of the BA students are able to recognize Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence in a given sample, 18% of the BA students are capable of recognizing dynamic equivalence but are not able to identify formal equivalence in the analysed fragment, and 6% of the BA students are not capable of recognizing either formal or dynamic equivalence. Whereas, 81% of the MA students can discern formal and dynamic equivalence correctly;
-   23% of the BA students and 31% of the MA students are of complete agreement that a translator achieves the equivalent effect thanks to transference of the source text message into the target text that is natural and understandable to the reader;
-   47% of the BA students and 25% of the MA students are of the opinion that a translator should be totally natural, so that the target text does not sound like a translation but like a piece of an authentic text;
-   23% of the BA students believe that dynamic equivalence occurs most frequently in the translation of literary texts, 18% of them are of the opinion that it occurs in the

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[1] Success in translation is understood as a rendition that is comprehensible and seems natural to the reader.

translation of poetry, and 12% in the translation of journalistic writing; whereas, 37% of the MA students are of the opinion that dynamic equivalence occurs most frequently in the translation of poetry, 12.5% of the MA students believe that the occurrence frequency of dynamic equivalence is highest in the translation of literary texts;

- 23% of BA students believe that domestication is the most useful strategy in achieving the effect of equivalence in translation, 18% that adaptation is the most useful, and 12% opted for foreignization. By way of analogy, 29% of the BA students are of the opinion that literal translation is the least useful, and 23% that calque is the least helpful. In the case of the MA students, 19% of them find domestication to be the most useful strategy in achieving the effect of equivalence in translation. 37% of the MA students believe the literal translation method is the least useful, and 19% of them are of the opinion that calque is the least useful;
- 59% of the BA students believe that dynamic equivalence grants the translator the greatest freedom; 12% of the BA students find dynamic equivalence the most convenient to be used by the translator. 41% of the BA students think that dynamic equivalence requires the most creativity from the translator. 25% of the MA students believe that dynamic equivalence is the most convenient to be used by the translator, and 56% of the MA students think that dynamic equivalence requires the greatest amount of creativity from the translator;
- 18% of the BA students were of the opinion that formal equivalence requires more effort from the translator than dynamic equivalence; contrary to the BA students 37% of the MA students think that dynamic equivalence requires more effort from the translator than formal equivalence;
- 29% of the BA students and 37% of the MA students believe that the application of dynamic equivalence can potentially guarantee success in translation.

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