

CULTURAL CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EQUIVALENCE

Abstract

The present research explores Cultural Linguistics implications for the long-lasting problem of equivalence in translation theory and focuses on rendering cultural conceptualizations underlying lexical items in translation, that categorize utterances according to their underlying conceptual structures. These conceptual structures are described as comprising either cultural schemas, cultural metaphors, or cultural categories. Depth analysis of underlying cultural conceptualizations in a translation demonstrates the crucial role Cultural Linguistics plays in the core model of equivalence which is capable of capturing, unpacking, and analyzing cultural conceptualizations underlying lexical items in the source text, and deconstructing them into the new linguistic reality of the target text.

Keywords: *cultural linguistics, cultural conceptual model of equivalence, dynamic equivalence, formal equivalence, translation equivalence theory, cultural conceptualizations, cultural schemas, cultural metaphors, cultural categories, intercultural communication*

ЭКВИВАЛЕНТТҮҮЛҮКТҮН МАДАНИЙ КОНЦЕПТУАЛДЫК МОДЕЛИ

Кыскача мазмуну

Бул изилдөө котормонун теориясындагы эквиваленттүүлүктүн көптөн чечилбей келе жаткан көйгөйүнө байланышкан маданият аралык лингвистиканын таасирин изилдейт жана котормодогу лексикалык элементтердин негизинде маданий концептуалдык көрсөтмөлөргө багытталып, алардын айтылышы түпкү концептуалдык структурасына жараша ыргакталат. Бул концептуалдык структуралар маданий схемаларды, маданий метафораларды же маданий категорияларды камтып сүрөттөйт. Котормодо түптөлгөн маданий концептуалдык терең талдоо маданият аралык лингвистикасынын эквиваленттүүлүктүн моделинде чечүүчүдөгү негизги ролун көрсөтөт, ал баштапкы тексттеги лексикалык элементтердин негизинде маданий концептуалдаштырууну камтуу менен, тексттин максатын талдоо жана аларды жаңы лингвистикалык реалдуулукка айландырууга багытталат.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: *Маданий аралык лингвистика, эквиваленттүүлүктүн маданий концептуалдык модели, динамикалык эквиваленттүүлүк, формалдуу эквиваленттүүлүк, котормо эквиваленттүүлүк теориясы, маданий концептуализациялар, маданий схемалар, маданий метафоралар, маданий категориялар, маданияттар аралык коммуникация*

КУЛЬТУРНО-КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНАЯ МОДЕЛЬ ЭКВИВАЛЕНТНОСТИ

Аннотация

В настоящем исследовании рассматриваются последствия культурной лингвистики для давней проблемы эквивалентности в теории перевода, и основное внимание уделяется созданию культурных концептуализации, лежащих в основе лексических единиц в переводе, которые классифицируют высказывания в соответствии с лежащими в их основе концептуальными структурами. Эти концептуальные структуры описываются как состоящие либо из культурных схем, либо из культурных метафор, либо из культурных категорий. Глубинный анализ культурных концептуализации, лежащих в основе перевода, демонстрирует важнейшую роль культурной лингвистики в основной модели эквивалентности, которая способна улавливать, распаковывать и анализировать культурные концептуализации, лежащие в основе лексических единиц исходного текста, и деконструировать их в новую языковую реальность текста перевода.

Ключевые слова: *Культурная лингвистика, культурная концептуальная модель эквивалентности, динамическая эквивалентность, формальная эквивалентность, теория переводческой эквивалентности, культурные концептуализации, культурные схемы, культурные метафоры, культурные категории, межкультурная коммуникация*

In general, when translators find an instance of a culturally-constructed lexical item in the source text, they assign a function to that instance within an overall skopos of the translation task [1] and use this function to find solutions

they consider adequate [2, 3]. Such solutions may or may not be acceptable to the target readers of the translated text. Hence, here we are not dealing with a total equivalence, but with a correspondence that may or may not be acceptable to the readers of the target text. From this perspective, the important issue is not to ask whether the semantic import of the target language instances is or is not a total equivalent of that of the source language instances, but whether their textual function as activators of cultural conceptualizations is or is not equivalent to that of the source text instances [2, 3].

Cultural conceptualization as a central concept here is used in the present research to indicate “patterns of distributed knowledge across the cultural group” [4], which also covers schematization and schemas [5], and Lakoff’s [6] categories and metaphors, which are of particular importance for the analysis of the translation of culturally-constructed elements. All in all, by moving beyond the current cognitive and linguistic theories and with the aim of analyzing the relationship between language and cultural conceptualizations for describing embodied and culturally-embedded lexical items, Cultural Linguistics [7] provides coherent multidisciplinary analytical tools in the form of conceptual, analytical units such as cultural schemas, cultural metaphors and cultural categories, which are collectively called cultural conceptualizations, that will be applied, for the first time, in this research, to the notion of equivalence in translation theory.

Cultural conceptualizations as [7] argue capture all aspects of human life such as the conceptualizations of life and death, to conceptualizations of emotion, body, religion, gender, marriage, politics, etc. encoded and communicated through language features [8]. These language features are of special importance for translators in their daily tasks, for example, culturally-constructed lexical items which do not have equivalence in the target language, semantic and pragmatic meanings of culturally-constructed lexical items, and morpho-syntactic features of them, which pose significant challenges for translators. Since culturally-constructed lexical items are deeply rooted in a specific culture, consequently, for understanding and translating them, different types of cultural presuppositions are required [9]. For this reason, in order to translate a particular culturally constructed lexical item, translators need to be aware of both the language and the cultural context of the source text to which that particular lexical item refers so that both the language and the culture can be reconstructed into the new linguistic reality of the target text [10].

What is of particular importance here is that this cultural context underlying language features are shared by members of a linguistic community collectively [11]. The explanation for this is connected to the fact that as [4] maintains language is deeply rooted in a group-level cognition that emerges from the interactions between members of a cultural group. Since language and culture are inseparable, intertwined, and closely related, it is evident that language is one of the tools for storing and conveying cultural conceptualizations that emerge from group-level cognition across time and space.

Since the present study compares two languages and cultures through the prism of translation studies, it seems necessary at this point to describe what is the *tertium comparationis* in this comparative analysis. Leuven-Zwart [12] maintains that in comparative analysis, the basic textual units entering into comparison are called *transemes*. These

are units of a relational nature that do not exist a priori since they are only valid for the compared texts [3]. As [2, 312] argues “the fact that these translation units are established a ‘posteriori’ does not mean that we cannot previously formulate a general hypothesis that serves as ‘*tertium comparationis*’ in the analysis”. Hence bearing in mind that the present research deals with the translation of culturally-constructed lexical items, the hypothesis that serves as a *tertium comparationis* between the source text and the target text is the notion of cultural conceptualizations. Cultural conceptualizations, as previously discussed, are conceptual, analytical structures such as cultural schemas, cultural metaphors, and cultural categories, which not only exist at the individual level of cognition but also at the level of cultural group cognition, that are negotiated across time and space [7].

In this way, based on Nord’s *Functionalism in translation*, the instances of the target text are considered functional equivalents of that of the source text if these instances comply with the textual function involved and if there is a high degree of correspondence between the semantic-pragmatic and stylistic information of the conceptual structures, e.g., cultural schemas, cultural metaphors and cultural categories they activate [13, 219-230]. Based on this assumption [2, 316] that the translation of a culturally constructed element should be compared to the ‘conceptual profile’ of the source text’s elements; that is, to the cultural conceptualizations they activate, then the important step here is to analyze the function carried out by source text’s elements within the source culture. This way, the source text element’s ‘conceptual profile’ forms a norm that serves as a framework to decide the adequacy of the target text’s element based on the cultural conceptualizations it activates within the target culture [2, 3].

Therefore, the basic translator task is to mediate the cultural conceptualizations of source text senders and target text receptors in the translation task [2, 3]. The aim of this translation task as a purposeful activity [13], is to achieve a ‘cultural conceptual equivalence’ in translation, in order to transfer concepts across the source language to the target language, which consequently balances two important notions in translation: the linguistic expressions and the cultural conceptualizations they invoke and it is in line with the current shift toward conceptual transfer in translation, language, and cultural studies [14].

This translation task requires the translator to be aware of not only the language but also, more importantly, the culture in the source text. They need to break down cultures and analyze their components in the source text so that both the language and the culture can be reconstructed into the new linguistic reality of the target text [15]. In other words, the translator needs to be aware of not only the differences between the source text audience’s cultural conceptualizations and the target text audience’s cultural conceptualizations but also of how textual and linguistic processes are linked to ‘cultural-conceptualization-based-knowledge,’ that is the link between the linguistic expressions and the cultural conceptualizations they invoke.

Proposing Cultural Linguistics as a method of analysis in Translation Studies, the present research intends to facilitate the translator’s task by using a new equivalence model based on the interaction between the text (textual, linguistic knowledge) and the cultural conceptualizations (extra-linguistic knowledge) of the text interpreter. The

translator's task in the model of 'cultural conceptual equivalence' proposed here, is to mediate their analysis to the comprehension process (see the data analysis), considering that their task is to project the source language cultural conceptualizations (e.g. cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors) onto the target language linguistic elements that invoke a cultural conceptualization which should be, as much as possible, semantically, pragmatically and stylistically equivalent to that activated by the source text elements [7]. The new model of 'cultural conceptual equivalence' proposes that cultural conceptualizations are the tertium comparationis in the translation of culturally constructed elements, and only if the target-text-linguistic elements activate the relevant cultural conceptualizations for the interpretation of the text in the mind of the readers, will then target audience be able to draw the correct cultural conceptual-inferences on the basis of their system of cultural conceptualizations. From this perspective, through adopting the 'cultural conceptual equivalence' model in translation, the translator becomes a kind of 'cultural linguistics mediator' between two different systems of cultural conceptualizations that each linguistic community has. This way, the translator will consequently be able to produce efficient functional translations, both culturally and linguistically, for successful/effective intercultural communication. This is a phenomenon that needs desperate attention and exploration, perhaps more than ever in the history of human interaction.

This research indicated that culturally-constructed lexical items draw heavily on various kinds of cultural conceptualizations, e.g. cultural schemas, cultural metaphors, and cultural categories and that their meanings cannot be transferred across the source language to the target language by linguistic components "alone." In other words, when translating culturally-constructed lexical items, linguistic components are hardly ever sufficient to explain their configuration and *raison d'être* in order to convey their underlying cultural conceptualizations across the source language to the target language for the target audience's correct cultural-conceptual-inferences. We argue that neither the "sense" nor the "form" if translated, can render necessarily the underlying cultural conceptualizations associated with a particular lexical item across the source language to the target language. This necessitates paying closer attention to the conceptual aspects of translation in the core model of equivalence, especially conceptual dimensions that are culturally constructed. What we propose in this research, is a new systematic multidisciplinary analytical model, from the meta-theoretical point of view, for an in-depth analysis of culturally-constructed elements – despite their long-lasting notorious elusiveness, as analytical objects, in translation studies. The 'Cultural Conceptual Model of Equivalence' developed in this research is capable of capturing, unpacking, and analyzing the conceptual aspects of translation, which the existing translation models are not capable of, in deconstructing the translation of culturally-constructed elements across the source language to the target language, for successful/effective intercultural communication. Several scholars often lucidly emphasize that taking into account multiple culturally-constructed conceptual dimensions underlying language features and linguistic expressions

in order to provide an exhaustive model of translation equivalence, is a large step for translation scholars, which the present research attempted to take. Several other researchers support this discussion, and it is in line with the progressive global currents toward conceptual transfer in translation, language, and cultural studies. A notion that increases intercultural understanding, and which needs desperate attention and exploration, perhaps more than ever in the history of human interaction, in this globalized world.

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