

FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT AS A TRANSLATION PROCEDURE USED FOR TRANSLATION OF EXPRESSIVE LEXIS

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Abstract

This paper deals with effectiveness of the procedure *functional equivalent* used for translating literary texts rich in expressive lexis, which can be regarded as their stylistic feature. The purpose is to draw conclusions on how much this procedure ensures conveying the necessary stylistic effect from the original in the translation as well as on how the analysis of inappropriate translation equivalents can be applied in practice to enhance the potential of translation procedures when working with expressive lexis and to improve translation quality in general.

Key words: literary translation, functional equivalent, expressive lexis, stylistic effect, translation quality

INTRODUCTION

Literary translation has always been one of the central issues in translation studies. To translate a literary text and to produce a translation which the reader will intuitively recognize as successful and readable is not an easy task. On the contrary, it is a very complex skill, which requires not only substantial knowledge in both source and target languages, but also a considerable amount of creativity and artistic potential. This complexity can be put down to the fact that, in addition to the communicative function, literary texts have aesthetic purpose as well. Translators must not overlook it and should strive to

transfer it into the target language in an effective and stylistically appropriate manner. Recognizing stylistic features of a text, determining translation methods and appropriate translation strategies will lead translators towards successful translations and a reading audience relishing their work.

THE CONCEPT OF EXPRESSIVE LEXIS

Expressive language¹ is a rather broad term which may be related to various linguistic units conveying emotional, expressive² and emphasising nuances such as admiration, disapproval, irony etc. **Expressive lexis** or **expressive lexical units**, such as **slang, idioms, vulgarisms, taboos, dysphemisms, offensive words, diminutives and hypocorisms, interjections and onomatopoeic words**³, have additional meaning providing the speaker with the possibility to express his/her thoughts in accordance with his/her attitudes and emotions.

The most important feature of expressive words is their **connotative aspect**, which contains different components such as **expressiveness, emotionality, evaluation** and **imagery**⁴. **Connotation** is actually part of their lexical meaning which supplements its basic, denotative meaning; it reflects most of the

¹ *Expressive language* can be understood as referring to various types of expressive linguistic units such as onomatopoeic words, interjections, grammar constructions, elliptical constructions etc. However, for the purpose of the research, this paper focuses on expressive **lexical** units only, without taking into consideration other types of expressive linguistic units.

² *Expressiveness* can be broadly defined as semantic and stylistic features of language units accentuating their distinctiveness and stressing the intensity of what is being communicated (Бояджиев, 2002:264).

³ There are numerous classifications of expressive lexical units. Some focus on their connotative aspect and meaning (Leech, 1990; Dickins, Hervey and Higgins, 2013; Finegan, 2004), while others tend to approach them from a semantic or stylistic point of view (Минова-Ѓуркова, 2003; Бояджиев, 2002). For the purpose of this paper, expressive lexical units are classified according to their semantic and stylistic aspects related to the extralinguistic context they usually appear in. For more detailed information on different types of expressive words and their most important specificities, see Ѓурчевска Атанасовска, 2015: 61-70.

⁴ For more detailed information on the most important characteristics of connotation see Ристић, 2004: 18-23.

sociological and psychological associations of expressive words, as well as the attitude of the speaker towards what is being communicated and the reality the language sign refers to (Ристик, 2004). Connotation evaluates concepts and actions. Evaluation is the core of connotation; it contributes to the expressiveness of these words and reflects their cultural and stylistic aspects (Бояджиев, 2002:263-264).

EXPRESSIVE LEXIS AS A STYLISTIC FEATURE OF THE ORIGINAL

When it comes to translation of expressive lexis in **literary texts**, notice should be taken of certain specificities. In addition to **aesthetic dimension**, which exerts a distinctive artistic effect on the reader (Leech, 1969) and **foregrounding**, which refers to those parts of the text in which language is ‘unusual’ enough to attract the readers’ attention by bringing about affective response (Louwerse and van Peer, 2002: 91-92), **style** is another vital feature of literary texts. According to Crystal, it “refers to a selection of language habits, the occasional linguistics idiosyncrasies which characterize an individual uniqueness (Crystal and Davy, 1969: 9), while Leech and Short define it as “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose” (Leech and Short, 1981: 10).

Style is regarded as a choice from more alternatives; it is dependent on the context, the function and the purpose it should fulfill as well as on the affective stimulus it should produce. To determine the style of a literary text, attention should be paid on the frequency of certain linguistic features whose evident presence in the text draws the reader’s attention (ibid: 43). The author intentionally uses certain linguistic features in a given context to create an effect on the reader. If a linguistic feature is obviously present in a text, its presence is certainly purposeful and without it the reader’s response would be completely different (ibid.).

Speaking of expressive lexis as a stylistic feature of literary texts, it conveys a strong message to the reader about the topic, the characters, the setting; it reflects the mental image of the author or of the characters and ultimately gives an insight into the stylistic and artistic dimension of a text. Connotation being the most important feature of

expressive words, translators have to make sure that it is not omitted in translation or ‘neutralized’ in any way because in such case, the translation would not have the necessary impact on the readers.

TRANSLATION METHOD AND FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT PROCEDURE

When it comes to translation method and strategies available when dealing with literary texts, the purpose that translation should achieve, as well as the concept of equivalence⁵ upon which translation process is based, translators should adhere to the **principle of similar or equivalent effect or response**. This means that they should strive to transfer the stylistic effect from the original in the translation as much as possible and to make a similar impression on the reader (Newmark 1995:10).

According to Reiss, translation methods are dependent on text-type, purpose of the translation and reading audience. Having in mind the text typology⁶ she proposes, literary texts fall into the category of **form-focused or expressive texts**. In these texts, “**form** is concerned with how an author expresses himself, as distinct from **content**, which deals with what the author says” (Reiss: 2000:31). The conscious use of formal elements for a specific aesthetic effect do not simply exercise an influence over the subject matter, but go beyond this to contribute to a special artistic expression that can be reproduced in a target language only by **analogous forms of expression with a view of creating the necessary stylistic and artistic effect on the reader**” (ibid: 32).

In order to translate a literary text in which there is a frequent use of expressive lexis, meaning that they have been intentionally chosen by the author to create a distinctive impression and effect on the reader, the translator should try to find **analogous formal translation**

⁵ For more information on *equivalence* as a central concept in translation studies, see Jakobson, 1959/2000:114, Munday, 2001: 37, Nida in Venuti, 1964b/2000: 1964, Nida, 1964a: 159.

⁶ For more details on Reiss’s text typology of different text-types and translation methods used for each of them, consult Reiss, 2000: 17-41 and Chesterman, 1989: 105.

equivalents which would evoke the same associations in the reader.

Speaking of different translation procedures⁷ which are available within the translation method used for literary texts, this paper focuses on **functional equivalent** as a translation procedure used to translate expressive lexis. This procedure is of special interest since it is intended to evoke analogous effects on the reader with the ones from the original in regards to the cultural dimension of expressive lexis (Newmark, 1995:31, Арсова-Николиќ 1999:147-150).

According to Arsova-Nikolic, **functional equivalent** is classified as a “procedure within the approximate translation strategies, used to trigger similar emotions and associations as the ones from the original text” (*ни денар – not a penny, опинци – rawhide sandals*) (Арсова-Николиќ 1999:147-150). Newmark uses the term **cultural equivalent** and defines it as an “approximate translation where a source language cultural word is translated by a target language cultural word”⁸ (*baccalauréat – A level*) (Newmark 1995:31).

It is clear that functional equivalent can be used for translating words and notions related to source culture. Taking into consideration that expressive lexis can be very much culturally infused (Бояджиев, 2002:263-264), finding analogous formal translation equivalents to such words can pose considerable difficulty to translators.

CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

This paper deals with examining the effectiveness of the functional equivalent procedure within the translation method used for translating literary texts whose stylistic feature is expressive lexis. Translations of expressive words in literary texts have been analysed in terms of assessing how much the functional equivalent procedure

⁷ For more information on different classifications of translation procedures see Vinay and Darbalent, 1958/1995 in Venuti, 2000: 84-91, Newmark, 1995 and Арсова-Николиќ 1999: 147-150).

⁸ Newmark uses the term functional equivalent in a different context. According to him, this procedure is used to translate a cultural word with a word without cultural connotations so that the translated word is generalised or neutralised and represents a certain kind of cultural componential analysis (*baccalauréat – French secondary school leaving exam, Сејт – Полски парламент*) (Newmark 1988: 83).

ensures meeting the stylistic standards of the original through providing analogous formal translation equivalents which would evoke the necessary associations in the reader.

The survey has been carried out as part of the PhD thesis entitled ***“The challenges of translating expressive lexical units: based on examples of literary translations from English into Macedonian”***⁹. It deals with translating expressive words from English into Macedonian with a view to illuminating certain issues and challenges which translators may encounter. The corpus from which the examples are excerpted consists of two short stories collections, ***“What We Talk about When We Talk about Love”***¹⁰ by Raymond Carver and ***“The Most Beautiful Woman in Town”***¹¹ by Charles Bukowski written in English and its Macedonian translations¹².

252 examples of different types of expressive lexis from the originals were compared to their Macedonian translations. Having in mind Reiss’s text typology and her functionalist approach to translation, it was analysed whether the translators were able to provide functionally equivalent translations for the expressive lexis from the originals, ensuring the same stylistic effect on the reader through choosing appropriate analogous forms in Macedonian.

The contrastive analysis of the examples included detecting translation procedures used and evaluating the stylistic effectiveness of translation equivalents within the translation methodology applied to form-oriented texts. Special attention was paid to the translation equivalents which were found to be unsuccessful by not conveying the connotative nuance of the original expressive words, which is crucial for a form-oriented text. The effects of the unsuccessful translations on the overall translation quality were studied and alternative

⁹ Ѓурчевска Атанасовска, К. (2015). *Преведување експресивна лексика: проблеми и предизвици – врз примери на книжевни преводи од англиски на македонски јазик* (докторска дисертација), Скопје, Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“

¹⁰ Carver, R. (2009) *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. London: Vintage Books

¹¹ Bukowski, Ch. (2008). *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town and Other Stories*. London: Virgin Books Ltd

¹² Карвер, Р. (1990). *За што зборуваме кога зборуваме за љубовта*. Скопје, Култура; Буковски, Ч. (2009). *Најубавата жена во градот и други раскази*. Скопје: Икона

translation equivalents with comments were offered with a view to providing better results and effect on the reader.

The functional equivalent procedure was detected in 31 out of 252 analyzed examples of translated expressive lexis from the corpus. The comparative analysis of the examples provides insights and conclusions on how much the functional equivalent procedure ensures conveying the necessary stylistic effect of the expressive lexis from the original into the translation; in addition, it offers a possibility to examine how the analysis of inappropriate translation equivalents can be applied in practice in order to enhance the potential of this translation procedure when working with expressive lexis as well as to improve the overall translation quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that when it comes to translation of expressive lexis, the functional equivalent procedure gives considerably successful results by providing analogous formal translation equivalents which convey the necessary stylistic effect. This tendency is detected in 23 out of 31 analysed examples, or more precisely in 74.2% of the analysed cases.

For example, the expression *God damn it* (*The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*, p.117) is used as a swear word to express disappointment, dissatisfaction or annoyance (OALD¹³). The translator used the expression *да му се сневиду* (МФМФР)¹⁴, which is used as a swear word in Macedonian; it has a very similar emotional charge as its English counterpart from the original and is used in similar contexts expressing disappointment or anger.

Another example is the word *honey* (*What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*, p. 72). Apart from its denotative meaning, *honey* can also be used as a term of endearment meaning *sweetheart* or *dear* and expressing affectionate relationship with somebody (TFDTO¹⁵). In the example form the corpus, one of the characters uses it to

¹³ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

¹⁴ Македонска фразеологија со мал фразеолошки речник

¹⁵ The Free Dictionary and Thesaurus Online

address her son. It seems that the translator kept the affectionate charge of this word and consequently used the word *срце*, which is frequently used in Macedonian in similar contexts as a term of endearment. This translation equivalent meets the connotative aspect of the original, contains the necessary imagery and can be considered as its analogous formal translation equivalent producing the same stylistic effect on the reader.

Bunghole is another example analysed in the survey (*The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*, p. 46). According to UD¹⁶ and TFDTO, *bunghole* is a vulgar slang for the anus. The word is used as part of the expression *up your old mother's bunghole*, which is a swear word used in extremely vulgar contexts expressing anger or irritation. The translator used the expression *на мајка ти (РЖЗИ)*¹⁷, which also has an extremely vulgar and pejorative connotation and evokes similar associations in Macedonian; it has very frequent usage as a swear word expressing anger and disapproval.

However, some of the analysed examples show that this translation procedure does not offer appropriate translation equivalents within the translation method required. In 8 out of 31 analysed examples, or more precisely in 25.8% of the cases, the use of this translation procedure does not provide formal equivalents evoking the same stylistic effect.

For example, the expression *Get the hell out of somewhere* (*What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*, p.131) is an idiomatic expression meaning *to leave a place immediately*. It is used in very informal contexts expressing urgency to leave because of irritation or annoyance. The translator used the expression *по гаволите*, most probably because of the word *hell* used in the original, and combined it with the stylistically neutral *оди си*. Semantically speaking, this translation equivalent matches the meaning from the original, but it is not as colloquial and informal as the original expression. In Macedonian, there are far more vivid expressions with this meaning like *зуби се, магла, маглоса, се, да те нема, очи да не ти видам, крши глава, тргни ми се од пред очи* (МФМФР) etc. They would be more suitable in context and are stylistically more appropriate.

¹⁶ Urban Dictionary

¹⁷ Речник на жаргонски зборови и изрази

To hell with it is similar to the previous example (*The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*, p. 9). According to TFDTO, it is used as a swear word to express anger, irritation or disapproval. The translator again uses the expression *no řavolime*, which it is rather formal and can be understood as a kind of literal translation of the original expression. It does not fit the extremely informal original context and sounds very unnatural. Other, stylistically more appropriate analogous formal equivalents should be taken into consideration such as *нека се зонат, нека се носат, кој ги шиша/врти* (МФМФР) etc.

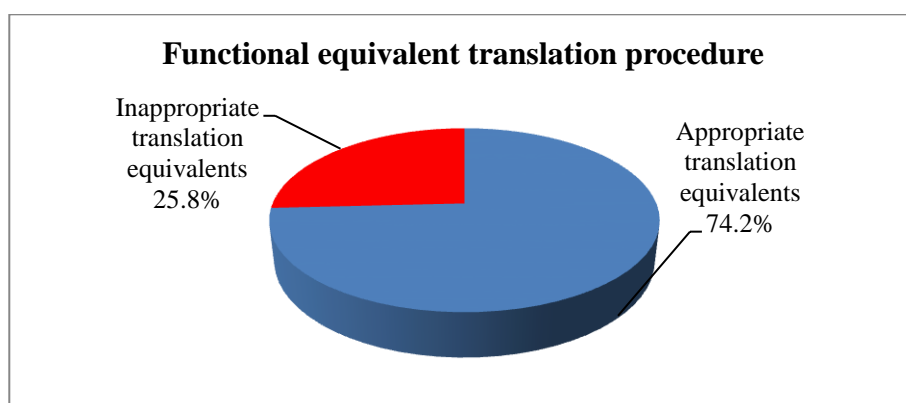
Another example is the expression *God bless* (*What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*, p. 64), which is used when saying goodbye to someone, to express hope that good things will happen to somebody or when somebody sneezes to wish them good health (CDO¹⁸). In the original context it is used when leaving a place and saying goodbye. The translator used the expression *будете благословени*, which does not match the original context and meaning. Namely it is used when wishing good health and well-being at weddings, christenings or other celebrations or when expressing gratitude. Other expressions like *да сте живи и здрави* or *останете со здравје* (МФМФР) would be stylistically and contextually more appropriate.

Table1

Translation procedure	Number of analysed examples	Appropriate translation equivalents	%	Inappropriate translation equivalents	%
Functional equivalent	31	23	74.2	8	25.8

¹⁸ Cambridge Dictionaries Online

Chart 1

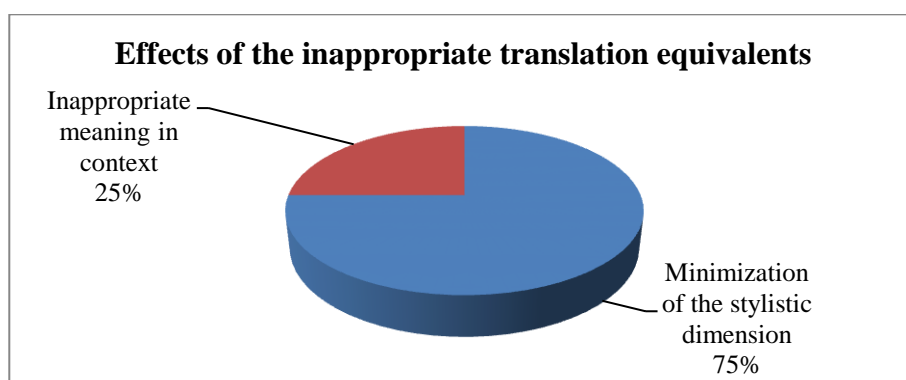


When it comes to the effects which inappropriate translation equivalents might have on the overall translation quality, two negative effects have been detected in the Macedonian translations. The examples show that, in most of the cases, inappropriate translation equivalents can lead to **minimization of the stylistic dimension of the translation**; consequently, this effect is more prevalent by being present in 6 out of 8 inappropriate translations, or in 75% of the analysed cases. The effect of **inappropriate meaning in context** is also present, but to a lesser extent. It is noticed in only 2 out of 8 inappropriate translations, or in 25% of the analysed cases. (See Table 2 and Chart 2).

Table 2

Effect	Number of cases	Percentage
Minimization of the stylistic dimension	6	75%
Inappropriate meaning in context	2	25%
Total	8	100%

Chart 2



CONCLUSION

The analysis clearly indicates that functional equivalent procedure is quite useful when translating expressive lexis as it generally offers stylistically appropriate translation equivalents. However, in cases in which the stylistic dimension of the original words is overlooked, this procedure can be unsuccessful by not providing analogous formal equivalents for the original expressions. In each of the examples in which the translation equivalents are considered to be inappropriate it was concluded that the expressive words from the original and their translation equivalents differ in terms of their stylistic markedness, which means that their connotative dimension is completely overlooked by the translator. It can be concluded that in cases when expressive words are translated inappropriately, this comes as a result of **neglecting their connotative charge**. This conclusion can be supported by the fact that alternative translation equivalents using the same translation procedure can be provided for inappropriate translations; the difference is that the alternative translation equivalents preserve the colourful and stylistic aspect of the expressive words from the original, resulting in a smooth and readable translation.

The high percentage of cases in which the effect of **minimization of the stylistic dimension of the translation** is noticed indicates that in such cases translation suffers considerable stylistic losses; furthermore, this might cause some other weaknesses such as

inappropriate language use by the characters within the extralinguistic context in which they appear, which additionally impairs translation quality in general.

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