RESEARCH

INTERLINGUAL TRANSLATION: AN ATTEMPT AT UNDERSTANDING SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

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Abstract: This paper attempts to look at some small fragments of interlingual translation studies. The article begins by exploring Roman Jakobson's tripartite division of translation of which interlingual translation is a component part. Then it presents in some detail the interlingual translation process. This is followed by two main sections where the core concept in interlingual translation theory and practice – "translation equivalence" (TE), some other concepts related to it, and three main approaches to TE are examined. It is clear from the paper that interlingual translation is a very complex social semiotic process, and that the concept of TE is employed in so many different senses that recently it has been denied by some scholars any value, or even any legitimate status in translation theory and translation practice. However, based on what is going on in the field of interlingual translation studies, it is suggested that the complexity of the interlingual translation process and the diversity of opinions on the concept of TE do not mean that scholars have complicated the problems. Rather, they have really contributed to the advancement of knowledge in the field, not with the intention of a final verdict, but as food for thought and invaluable reference materials for further research, making interlingual translation theory and practice an ever-moving academic discipline.

Keywords: interlingual translation, interlingual translation process, TE and related concepts, three approaches to interlingual TE

1. Introduction

I found some difficulty in choosing a title for this article, a title which being reasonably brief, would yet give some indication of what the focus of the subject matter was to be. What I was hoping to indicate was that, while the article is concerned with interlingual translation, it is not my purpose to add anything else to this already extremely complex domain of knowledge. This has been examined, and continues to be examined in ever-increasing detail, by linguists and translation scholars the world over, and I have in no way intended to extend the scope and delicacy of their research. What I want to do in this article is to take an exploratory look at interlingual translation and some of the fundamental concepts related to the nature of interlingual translation with the modest hope that it would help me broaden my mind – the still limited mind of a bilingual translation researcher and practitioner. My article will

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fall into six sections. Following Section one which introduces the study, Section two looks at three broad types of translation as proposed by the prominent Russian-born American linguist Roman Jakobson in his triadic system of translation in which interlingual translation is a component part. Section three, based on Jakobson's concept of "interlingual translation", explores and presents the concept of "process of interlingual translation". Section four is concerned specially with the concept of "translation equivalence" in interlingual translation studies and some other concepts related to it. Section five discusses three main approaches to translation equivalence in current interlingual translation theories. And Section six summarises what has been explored and affirms the achievements made in the field of interlingual translation studies for further research.

2. Jakobson's Triadic System of Translation

In an influential and widely quoted paper on translation studies published in a number of editions (1959, 1989, 2004, whose references in this article will be made to the 2004 edition) entitled "On linguistic aspects of translation", Jakobson puts translation firmly in a semiotic framework. According to Jakobson, in investigating translation, one must, first of all, accept the fact that although translation is essentially a linguistic activity, its principal part lies in the field of semiotics. Therefore, in order to fully understand the nature of translation, the researcher must go beyond the assumption that translation consists of transferring the meanings contained in a set of signs of one language to a set of signs of another language through a careful analysis of the source language text and effective use of dictionaries. Jakobson (2004) maintains that translation is a process that is constrained by not only language-internal factors but also language-external factors. Discussing the translation process, Jakobson argues that all human experiences and their division made by humans can be translated into any language. Based on semiotic principles, Jakobson (2004, p. 114) differentiates translation into three main types: (1) "intralingual translation"; (2) "interlingual translation"; and (3) "intersemiotic translation". Intralingual translation, according to Jakobson, is basic to every act of understanding and communication; interlingual translation is *translation proper* (italics in original) – the type of translation we are concerned with in this paper; and intersemiotic translation accounts for all types of sign language.

Jakobson (2004) observes that in intralingual translation, a word may be substituted by either another, more or less synonymous, word or by circumlocution; but he notes that synonymy is rarely complete equivalence. Similarly, in interlingual translation, there is often no full equivalence between code-units (a word or an idiomatic phrase-word), while messages may serve as adequate interpretation of alien code-units. Proceeding from this observation, Jakobson claims that the difference between intralingual and interlingual translation is, while in intralingual translation, the rewording is done at the level of substituting one code-unit by another code-unit, in interlingual translation the rewording is done at the level of substituting one larger unit in one language by another larger unit in another language which he calls "message". Such a translation, Jakobson maintains, is the reported speech; the translator encodes the source text message and transmits it to the target text message. Thus, translating, Jakobson suggests, "involves" two equivalent messages in two different codes. By using the verb "involves", Jakobson sets aside the dilemma of the idea that translation is a form of hermeneutics (see G. Steiner, 1998), a concept commonly held by

traditional translation studies in an attempt to provide answer to the question "Can messages be equivalent when their code-units are different?". On the other hand, because translation is viewed as interpretation, it can be extended far beyond the scope of the verbal medium. In fact, as a model of understanding and of the entire cognitive potential, translation also includes the interpretation of signs of non-verbal systems such as graphs, pictures or images, dance, music (through analysis) into verbal signs (through interpreting or expressing of those meanings in verbal signs) – the type of translation which Jakobson calls "intersemiotic translation".

Of the three types of translation as proposed by Jakobson in his triadic system, interlingual translation has occupied the central position. It is the type of translation most well-developed in translation theory and practice, and often the term is taken as if it were the only type of translation involved. In what follows, I will take a brief look at how the process of interlingual translation has been formulated in translation studies; and based on semiotic principles, I will attempt to present what I understand of the process of interlingual translation.

3. The Process of Interlingual Translation

Various attempts have been made to model the process of interlingual translation, implicitly or explicitly, in detail or in passing (e.g. Nida, 1964, 1975; Catford, 1965; Wilss, 1982a; Hatim & Mason, 1990; Bell, 1991, and many others). For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the models as developed by three scholars: Haas, Nida, and G. Steiner.

The first attempt to model the process of interlingual translation is perhaps associated with the British translation theorist and philosopher William Haas. In a paper entitled "The theory of translation" published in *Philosophy, 37*(141), Haas (1962) based his model of the process of interlingual translation on three entities or terms which we nowadays call "the source language text", "the translator" (including the interpreter), and "the target language text". The quote below indicates what Haas says as a way of theorising the interlingual translation/interpreting process:

> At first sight, this is what we are tempted to make of translation – an operation with three terms: two expressions and a meaning they share. When we translate, we seem to establish a relation of three distinct entities, each separately apprehended: the two expressions seen on paper or heard in the air, and the meaning in the translator's mind. (Haas, 1962, p. 208)

Theorising translation process is also one of the main concerns of the American translation theoretician and Bible translator Eugene Nida. In several of his publications, Nida (1964, 1975, and elsewhere) argues that a careful analysis of what exactly goes on in the process of translating has shown that instead of going directly from one set of surface structures to another, a competent translator actually goes through a three-stage process: analysis, transfer, and restructuring. According to this process, the translator first analyses the message of the source language text into its simplest and structurally clearest forms, transfers the analysed material in his mind from the source language text to the target language text which is the most appropriate for the audience who he intends to reach. Nida's three-stage process of interlingual translation can be represented as follows:

Figure 1

Nida's Process of Translating (Nida, 1975, p. 80)

From another perspective, the German translation theorist George Steiner (1975/1998), who seems to identify interlingual translation process with intralingual one and sees all forms of human communication as translation, presents the interlingual translation process in the following quote:

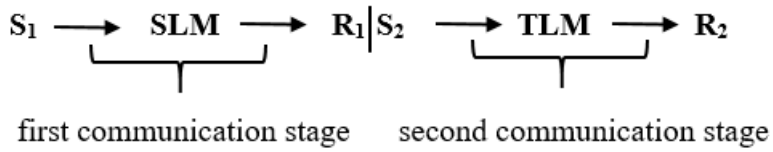
> On the inter-lingual level, translation will pose concentrated, visibly intractable problems; but these same problems abound, at a more covert or conventionally neglected level, intra-lingually. The model 'sender to receiver' which represents any semiological and semantic process is ontologically equivalent to the model 'source-language to receptor-language' used in the theory of translation. In both schemes, there is 'in the middle' an operation of interpretative decipherment, an encoding-decoding function or synapse. Where two or more languages are in articulate interconnection, the barriers in the middle will obviously be more salient, and the enterprise of intelligibility more conscious. But the 'motions of spirit', to use Dante's phrase, are rigorously analogous. So, as we shall see, are the most frequent causes of misunderstanding or, what is the same, of failure to translate correctly. In short: *inside or between languages, human communication equals translation*. (G. Steiner, 1998, p. 49)

What Haas, Nida and Steiner have observed, in my opinion, is right seen from the point of view of their respective perspective; but they seem to neglect a number of details contributing to understanding the nature of the interlingual translation process. In Haas' formulation, details of the speaker or writer of the source language, the cultural (including situational) context in which he produces the SL text; the source language listener/reader who the speaker/writer intends to address; details of the translator, his first language or mother tongue and the culture in which he lives and produces the target language text, his role between the source language text and the target language text, his interlingual and intercultural competences; and the listener/reader who he intends to address in the target language and culture, were not explicitly provided. In Nida's translation process scheme, details of what precisely takes place in the translator's mind at the TRANSFER stage is not fully explicated. And most of these details left unmentioned by Haas and Nida are also neglected in G. Steiner's formulation; and, in addition, by seeing all forms of communication as translation and, in particular, by identifying intralingual communication with interlingual translation, G. Steiner seems to underestimate much of the latter's translation process (for more detail, see Wilss, 1982a).

Any interlingual translator would readily agree that translation is a process which begins from a text (spoken or written) in the source language and ends with a translation text in the target language. The source language text is produced or created by a person commonly called "speaker" if it is a spoken text or "writer" if it is a written text; and the target language text is reproduced (with the content transferred) from the source language text by a person called "translator" whose role can be characterized as "a mediator between the producer of a source text and whoever are its TL receivers" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 223) and whose task is to make various "personal choices made on the basis of patterns that have been codified, taught, and internalized, but the translator's own nevertheless" (Retsker, 1993, p. 18; see also Wilss, 1982a; Bell, 1991; G. Steiner, 1998). A closer observation, however, will reveal that an interlingual translation process includes two stages. The first stage is somewhat similar to that of the intralingual communication process which consists of the producer (the speaker or writer) who concurrently sends the source language message (**SLM**) referred to generally as **Sender**$_1$ (**S**$_1$) and the addressee (or the intralingual translator) who receives the SLM referred to generally as **Receiver**$_1$ (**R**$_1$). The second stage consists of the translator, whose role is **R**$_1$ in the first stage and who concurrently acts as the producer and sender of the target language message (**TLM**) referred to generally as **Sender**$_2$ (**S**$_2$), and the receiver or addressee of the TLM referred to generally as **Receiver**$_2$ (**R**$_2$). Formulated in this way, the interlingual translation process can be represented diagrammatically in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Two Stages of Interlingual Translation Process



It should be noted from the figure above that we have left out three important features of the interlingual translation process: (1) the difference between what we would like to refer to as a pure intralingual communication or monolingual translation (if we want to consider intralingual communication as a form of translation) and an intralingual communication as the first stage of the interlingual translation process, (2) the roles of the communicators in the pure intralingual translation process and those of the communicators in the first stage of the interlingual translation process; and (3) the roles of the communicators/ translators in the pure intralingual communication process and those of the source language text producer, the translator-target language text producer, and the target language text receiver in an interlingual translation process.

If one attempts a detailed analysis of intralingual translation/ communication process and interlingual translation/ communication process, one can realize that they differ from each other in at least two respects. First, an intralingual translation process takes place within one and the same language, while an interlingual translation process occurs between two languages. Secondly, an intralingual translation is usually a two-way (bi-directional) process beginning from the sender to the receiver of the message and vice versa, while an

interlingual translation is a one-way (unidirectional) process beginning from the source language text speaker/writer via the interlingual translator to the target language translation receiver. In other words, in an intralingual translation, communication often takes place between two communicators, and either of them can take the role of the sender or the receiver of the message (text); in an interlingual communication, in contrast, each of the communicators takes a distinct role: the source language text speaker/writer takes the role of the sender of the SL text message (**S_1**); the translator takes a double role: that of the receiver of the SL text message and that of the sender of the transferred TL text message (**R_1 | S_2**); and the listener/reader of the target language takes the role of the TL receiver (**R_2**) (for more detail on this point, see Bell, 1991, p. 15; see also Koster, 2008).

The German translation scholar Christiane Nord (2000, p. 196) takes a step further, distinguishing between "receivers of a translation" and "addressees of a translation". In her opinion, receivers of a translation are the individual persons who actually read or listen to the translation, while addressees of a translation are the type or prototype of person to whom the translation is addressed. Nord observes that translators are real receivers of the SL text, but they are not normally the addressees of a SL text at least if they are members of the TL culture. Addressees, in her view, are the TL audiences of any translation. They are not real persons, but a concept abstracted from the sum total of our communicative experience; that is, from the vast number of characteristics of receivers we have observed in previous communicative occurrences that bear some analogy with the one we are confronted with in a particular situation.

4. Translation Equivalence and Some Translation Equivalence-Related Concepts

4.1. Translation Equivalence

It has been widely recognized that the key issue of interlingual translation is meaning (Firth, 1968; Catford, 1965; Neubert, 1984; Bell, 1991; G. Steiner, 1998; Hoang, 2006; and many others). Meaning is "the kingpin of translation studies" (Neubert, 1984, p. 57) and "the heart of the translator's work" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 25). Meaning is so important in interlingual translation that

> without understanding what the text to be translated means for the L2 [target language] users the translator would be hopelessly lost. This is why the translation scholar has to be a semanticist of the text, not just of words, structures and sentences. The key concept for the semantics of translation is textual meaning. (Neubert, 1984, p. 57)

If one attempts a survey, asking around what people interested in translation think an interlingual translation should achieve, a most likely answer would be that it should convey as closely and clearly as possible the meaning of the original (source) text. This view being accepted, it would follow that in translating a text from one language into another, the translator is not simply converting one form of the source language text into another form of the target language translation, or, to use Haas' (1962, p. 228) metaphor, "He [the translator] is not changing vehicles or clothing". What the translator does is to transform the meaning of the source language text into the target language text with an aim to establish what has often been referred to in translation theory and translation practice as "equivalence" between the two texts.

"Equivalence" is obviously a "central organizing concept" in interlingual

translation theory and practice (Halliday, 2001, p. 15; House, 2015, p. 5); see also Wilss, 1982a, 1982b; Munday, 2016; Hoang, 2010, 2022). The exact date the term "equivalence" emerged in translation studies is indeterminate; but what seems to be certain is that the term was imported into translation studies from mathematics (Wilss, 1982a; see also Bassnett-McGuire, 2002). According to Wilss (1982a), mathematicians use the term equivalence "if between the elements of (two) sets a reversibly unambiguous relation prevails" (Brockhaus Enzyklopadie, 1966, as cited in Wilss, 1982a, p. 138). But since it migrated to translation discourse, "translation equivalence" (TE) has turned out to be an extremely complex concept, causing a lot of confusion and disagreement among translation scholars. The complexity of the concept can be seen in the fact that to date, in publications in English alone, it is given so many different meanings: "communicative equivalence" (Jäger, 1975, as cited in Koller, 1989, p. 99), "equivalence in difference" (Jakobson, 1959/1989/2004, p. 114), "equivalence of effect" (Koller, 1989), "illusionist v. non-illusionist translation" (Levý, 1969), "closest natural equivalence" (Nida & Taber, 1982, p. 12), "formal equivalence v. dynamic equivalence" (Nida, 1964, p. 159), "formal correspondence v. textual translation equivalence" (Catford, 1965, p. 27), "linguistic, paradigmatic, stylistic, and textual equivalence" (Popovič, 1976), "functional invariance" (Roganova, 1971), "text-pragmatic equivalence" (Wilss, 1982a, 1982b), "syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic equivalence" (Neubert, 1968; Baker, 2018), "equivalent correspondences" and "variant correspondences" (Retsker, 1993, pp. 22-25), "a rich diversity of similarities" (Yallop, 2001, p. 242), "functional equivalence" (House, 2008, p. 97), and many others. It is, therefore, not possible to explore all those meanings in which the concept TE is employed. What I should do here is to answer the question whether there is equivalence between a source language (SL) text and a target language (TL) translation. Then I will pick up some translation equivalence-related concepts for examination. This will be followed by Section 5 where, placing TE in broader contexts, I will look at three approaches to TE in current translation theory.

4.2. Is There Equivalence Between a SL Text and a TL Translation?

This question raised in the heading is simple, but the answers to it are diverse and often polarized. Some scholars say "no", while others say "yes" (see Hoang, 2010). Scholars of the "no" view of TE base themselves on a number of arguments. They say that languages are like nomads, and no two languages can perceive the same reality in the same way (Whorf, 1956). Further, "…the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached." (Sapir, 1929, as cited in G. Steiner, 1998, p. 91). Therefore, translation from one language into another seems to be an impossible task. Furthermore, in translation practice the translator often operates between a dilemma – finding what has been referred to as "formal equivalence" and "functional equivalence". If the translator sticks to the first, he can preserve the structure and the context-free semantic sense of the original text, but might lose its context-sensitive communicative value; conversely, if the translator sticks to the second, he can preserve context-sensitive value of the original text, but might sacrifice the structure and the context-free semantic sense of the original text. To put it in another way, when

the translator favours formal equivalence, his translation can be faithful but ugly; conversely, when the translator favours functional equivalence, his translation can be beautiful but inaccurate (see Bell, 1991; House, 2008, 2015, see also Snell-Hornby, 2006).

In contrast, scholars of the "yes" view of TE also base themselves on a number of counter-arguments. The first argument rests on the idea that in actual translation practice "anything that can be said in one language can be said in another [language] with reasonable accuracy" (Nida & Taber, 1982, p. 4; see also Koller, 1995). Secondly, it is commonly held that "all human beings live in the same planet, and all have the same brains – the same neurological make-up – there is much in common to the ways in which the transformation of experience into meaning is brought about, in every language" (Halliday, 2017a, p. 195). If translation is viewed as the removal of communication barriers in order to find the equivalence of thought that lies behind verbal expressions, many words, phrases and expressions in one language can be equivalent to those corresponding elements in another language (see Jakobson, 2004). Thirdly, in arguing against the "no" view answer to the question of TE, some translation scholars hold that cultural differences should not be exaggerated, since expressions referring to culture-specific political, institutional, socio-economic, historical and geographical phenomena, which can be understood only in one particular "cultural situation" in which they are embedded, which consequently lack a corresponding expression in the target language, can nevertheless be translated by means of certain compensatory mechanisms. They suggest a number of standard procedures for overcoming such translation problems as loan words, adaptations, explications, commentaries, definitions and paraphrases (for more detail, see Koller, 1979, 1995). An example to prove this point would be the phrases: "mẹ tôi" in Vietnamese, "my mother" in English, and "моя матъ" in Russian. Although there are differences in the word order of these phrases: noun + pronoun in Vietnamese, possessive adjective + noun in English, and possessive adjective + noun in Russian, when a Vietnamese thinks of a woman he calls "mẹ tôi" (my mother), an Englishman thinks of a woman he calls "my mother" (mẹ tôi), and a Russian man thinks of a woman he calls "моя матъ" (mẹ tôi); in the mind of normal people, their thinking may be the same, and perhaps they will recall the same sweet memories, the tender care, and the pride of their mothers. If this line of reasoning is accepted, "mẹ tôi" in Vietnamese can be perfectly translated into English as "my mother" and into Russian as "моя матъ", and vice versa; and they can be considered absolutely equivalent to one another. This equivalence of thought realized in languages has perhaps constituted one of the important bases for compiling bilingual dictionaries.

4.3. Some Translation Equivalence-Related Concepts

4.3.1. Dictionary Equivalence: Is it a Final Truth for the Translator?

It often happens in interlingual translation that when encountering a new word in the SL text, the first task the translator often does is to look it up in a bilingual dictionary for the word in the TL which he thinks is equivalent to that in the SL text. The equivalence between a word in the SL text and a corresponding word in the TL translation established through looking up in a bilingual dictionary is commonly referred to as "dictionary equivalence". It cannot be denied that a dictionary, particularly a standard one is the translator's tool of trade, helping him to comprehend the SL text, to produce the TL translation and even verify his knowledge of the meaning

and usage. But why is translation still a difficult job when there are enough bilingual dictionaries available? Is it due to the lack of good bilingual dictionaries that can benefit the translator? (cf. Holmes, 1988, p. 110). The answer to these questions can be given when one realizes that the view behind the nature of a bilingual dictionary of the type x = y is not entirely correct. If one consults a bilingual dictionary, even one of value, one can immediately realize that the view that for every word in any language there is an absolute equivalent to it in all other languages is untrue (see Halliday et al., 1964; Halliday, 1966a). Even two words having the same or similar spelling, and belonging to two closely related languages cannot be said to be equivalents of each other. This is because in bilingual dictionaries, equivalence is shown at word rank which is far from translation proper. Further, "The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realization in speech" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 245). This is why a good bilingual dictionary often implicitly acknowledges this fact by offering the searcher two or more "versions of translation" for any one SL word that the searcher wishes to find, and if he is a translator, he will choose the word which he thinks is the most suitable for his purpose. However, experience has shown that it is not always possible for the translator to find equivalent words in bilingual dictionaries. It is suggested that to find a word in the TL that is equivalent to the one in the SL, "The translator must [also] actualize the implicit 'sense', the denotative, connotative, illative, intentional, associative range of significations which are implicit in the original, but which it leaves undeclared or only partly declared simply because the native auditor or reader has an immediate understanding of them" (G. Steiner, 1998, p. 291). If, for example, the English-Vietnamese translator only bases himself on the meanings listed in any dictionary, he will certainly not find the Vietnamese equivalent of "to go" in the phrase "25 days to go" which appeared in an ad on Channels S3 and ESPN about the 19th FIFA World Cup held in South Africa in the summer of 2010. The reason is because no English-Vietnamese dictionaries offer any translation of the infinitive form 'to go' in English as "nữa" in Vietnamese. If the translator does not actualize the implicit sense of "to go" and the co-textual sense of "to go" in relation to "25 days", and does not base himself on a broader non-linguistic context (i.e. the linguistic meaning of the phrase "25 days to go" in relation to the situation – the fact that the 19th FIFA World Cup would be held in South Africa in 25 days), he is sure not to be able to render correctly the phrase "25 days to go" into Vietnamese as "còn hai lăm ngày nữa" (back-translated into English as "25 days left" [before the 19th FIFA World Cup would begin]).

The above example is intended to show that the meanings provided in any bilingual dictionary should not be taken as the final truth for choosing an equivalent item and explaining translation equivalence.

4.3.2. Foreignising and Domesticating Translation and TE

When a translator comes across a new word or expression which appears in the SL text, he usually tries by all means to find a corresponding equivalent for his translation. However, due to the conflicting tendency of what has been referred to as "foreignising" and "domesticating" translation (see Nida, 1964, 2004; Venuti, 2008), TE seems to be a dilemma for him. Take the two French classic terms "langue" and "parole" as an example. These terms were introduced by the eminent Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in his famous *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916). The text in general and these terms in particular are not easy to translate into any language.

However, for domestication purpose or to serve the TL reader, they can be rendered, for example, into Vietnamese as "ngôn ngữ" and "lời nói"; into English as "language" and "speech", and into Russian as "язык" and "речь" respectively. But these versions of translation in the three target languages can hardly be said to be the equivalents of the original "langue" and "parole", because judging from demanding of linguistic equivalence between languages, "ngôn ngữ" and "lời nói", "language" and "speech", and "язык" and "речь" fail to capture the meanings that the author (de Saussure) has given to "langue" and "parole" in the French original text (for more detail concerning the English mistranslation of the French "langue" and "parole", see Harris, 2005, pp. xiii-iv). That explains why many linguists in the world today prefer to retain de Saussure's original terms "langue" and "parole" in their research discourse. But by retaining the source language original terms, they have coincidentally introduced "foreignness" into their TL texts. Thus, the question whether or not foreignising or domesticating translation can solve the problem of TE is still open.

4.3.3. Accuracy and Equivalence

In translation theory, "equivalence" and "accuracy" are sometimes treated as synonymous; and equivalence is said to involve accuracy. But "accuracy" in translation sometimes requires the translator to give up the principle of language economy; and this often makes it hard for him to achieve equivalence. One example can be seen in the translation into Vietnamese of the word "gobbledygook" on page 408 in *Từ điển về chính quyền và chính trị Hoa Kỳ* (The Harpercollins dictionary of government and politics) by Shafritz (2002). This is a four-syllable American-English word. Being a very culture-specific word, it has no one-term-to-one-term equivalent in Vietnamese. What the translators of this dictionary have done is to translate all that is explained in the original dictionary. Accordingly, "gobbledygook" = "ngôn ngữ hành chính rối rắm, lối văn cầu kỳ" (back-translated into English as "confusing administrative language, complicated writing style). Another example concerns the translation of the word "brinkmanship". In *Macquarie: Australia's national dictionary* edited by Delbridge, Bernard, Blair, Butler, Peters, & Yallop (2003, p. 242), "brinkmanship" is defined briefly as "the practice of courting disaster, especially nuclear war, to gain one's ends". But in Shafritz's (2002) *Từ điển về chính quyền và chính trị Hoa Kỳ*, this concept is defined and then explained at length. What the translators had to do was after rendering the definition of the concept into Vietnamese as 'chính sách "bên bờ vực thẳm chiến tranh"', they translated all four meanings/senses of the concept which is about one 16 x 24cm page long (half a page of p. 106 and half a page of p. 107). The same thing can be seen in the case of the translation of "ích quốc lợi dân" into English. In *Từ điển tiếng Việt* by Hoàng et al. (2002, p. 477), it is treated as a word (an entry). But when translated into English, *Từ điển Việt-Anh* by Bùi (2000, p. 945) gives two equivalent correspondences which are two adjectival phrases: "beneficial to one's country and people" and "useful for the country and the people". These translation facts explain in part why some translation theorists (e.g. Catford, 1965) suggest using the term "transfer" instead of the term "translation".

4.3.4. Adequacy and Equivalence

Another concept which is related to "equivalence" is "adequacy" introduced by Kamissarov (1980), Reiss & Vermeer (1984), and Shveitser (1993). "Equivalence" and "adequacy" are sometimes treated as synonymous and sometimes as distinct. Attempts have been made to distinguish "adequacy" from "equivalence", but due to

their fuzziness, the distinction between them is not quite clear-cut. "Equivalence", according to Reiss and Vermeer (1984), encompasses the relationships not just between separate units but also between whole texts; and on the level of units, "equivalence" does not necessarily imply equivalence of texts and vice versa. "Adequacy", in contrast, is concerned with the correspondence of linguistic units in the source text with linguistic units in the TL text; and for this reason, it is taken as the basic category of the translation process.

Distinction has also been made between "adequacy" and "adequate translation", and "equivalence" and "equivalent translation". While "adequacy" and "adequate translation" are used in connection with translation as a process, "equivalence" and "equivalent translation" are used in connection with the relationship between source text and target text which perform similar communicative functions in different cultures. In Reiss and Vermeer's (1984) view, equivalence is just one manifestation of adequacy, that is, functional adequacy between source and target text. But as Retsker (1993, p. 21) aptly points out "Since the criterion for adequacy can only be correspondence of the segment of reality depicted in the original [text], equivalence of devices is defined not by identity but by maximum approximation to the result achieved by the impact of the original". On the other hand, it has been pointed out by several translation theorists (e.g. Nida, 1964; Nida & Taber, 1982; Munday, 2016) that the basis for establishing correspondences of linguistic devices can only be functional, not formal, in nature. This is because "the demand for adequacy must be optimal rather than maximal in nature: a translation should meet certain (often somewhat incompatible) requirements and fulfill certain tasks in an optimal way" (Shveitser, 1993, p. 52). The complex process of translation contains many factors that can hinder the establishment of formal correspondences at the level of *parole*. The same linguistic form can perform many different functions depending on a number of different verbal and non-verbal factors. Therefore, while translating, what the translator must do is to rely on many different types of knowledge if he wants to have an adequate translation that fully reflects the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perceptions contained in the source language text. However, because text is the only material for the translator to work on, functional equivalence can be the basis for any linguistic approach to translation (Nida, 1964; Nida & Taber, 1982; Reiss & Vermeer, 1984).

It should be noted here that the quantity and quality of the factors contributing to functional equivalence vary according to the type of text being translated. What is often immutable is probably the logico-semantic basis which determines the processes of analysis and synthesis, and thus underlying all translation methods. It may happen sometimes that the translator can understand the facts described in the source language better and even more deeply than the author of the source language itself. But whether the translator is allowed to create a reality different from the one created by the author in the source language is an important issue, but it seems to go beyond our exploration here.

4.3.5. Communicative Effect and Equivalence

The relationship between "communicative effect" and "equivalence" is based on the view that a SL text and a TL translation are equivalent when they contain the same content (meaning) and are equally understood by the intended listeners or readers of the SL and those of the TL. The two examples below would illustrate the case in point.

The first example consists of four ANZ Bank VISA cards appearing in *The*

Australian on 22nd and 23rd July 1989. The four VISA cards are identical in form: they all contain details in English such as the name of the bank "ANZ bank" on the top left-hand-side corner, the word "Business" on the top right-hand-side corner, the four numbers "9999" and the word "VISA" in the bottom right-hand side, and some other details in the middle. Under each VISA card, there is a phrase: ACCEPTED HERE in English, ACEITA-SE AQUI in Portuguese, I ORAIT LONG USIM HIA in Tok Pisin (one of the three national languages of Papua New Guinea), and ACCEPTEE ICI in French.

The second example is two concurrent announcements, one in Vietnamese and the other in English heard at Noi Bai International Airport on July 2, 2019.

Kính thưa quý khách, Hãng hàng không Quốc gia Việt Nam xin thông báo, vì lí do thời tiết chuyến bay VN 263 đi Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh lúc 14:00 giờ bị chậm. Chúng tôi thành thật xin lỗi quý khách.

Ladies and gentlemen, we regret to inform you that Flight 263 to Ho Chi Minh City at 14:00 is delayed due to weather condition. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

A cursory look at the four VISA cards shows that the immediate context in which the four main texts occur are comparable: they were produced by one and the same bank to achieve the same communicative purpose: to inform customers that the card in any of the four languages is accepted at any ANZ bank branch. They, therefore, can be considered having the same "equivalent effect" (Nida, 1964, p. 159; Newmark, 1988b, p. 48). In the same way, in the second example the Vietnamese and English texts represent comparable communicative situations: they occurred roughly at the same time, in the same place, addressing the same target audiences (air-plane passengers). Further, after the announcements were made, both Vietnamese and overseas passengers who knew English could understand them in the same way: that due to weather condition their flight to Ho Chi Minh City was delayed. The two texts, therefore, can be said to be equivalent to each other. But a closer inspection would reveal that, like the case of the four visa cards, this represents only one aspect of equivalence: functional equivalence. To see whether or not the two texts are absolutely equivalent to each other, we need to complete our observation by considering their formal features: we must know not only that the two texts are equivalent of each other in their contextual meaning, but also whether or not they operate in the same way in their formal structures; i.e. whether or not they have the same formal meaning which is part of the total linguistic meaning (cf. Halliday et al., 1964; Halliday, 1966a).

4.3.6. "False Friends" and Equivalence

The term "false friends" is perhaps derived from translation practice. It has been pointed out that in translating a text from one language into another, one of the most common pitfalls of the interlingual translator in his quest for equivalence is probably his feeling of "illusory equivalence" – what

Nida (1964, 2004), Savory (1968), Lefevere (1977), Venuti (2008), and other translation scholars refer to as "false friends". The "false friends" pitfall can happen both interlingually and intralingually. Interlingually, "false friends" occurs when two languages are too closely related and words in the target language are the borrowed or cognate words in the source language which seem to be equivalent but are not always so. Examples are the words "***demand"*** in English and "***demander"*** in French**,** "***ignore"*** in English and "***ignorer"*** in Spanish**,** ***"virtue"*** in English and "***virtus"*** in Latin, and "***deacon"*** in English and "***diakonos"*** in Greek (see Nida, 1964, p. 160; 2004, p. 130). Intralingually, the pitfall of "false friends" can be extended to include the translator's choice of a word in the target language which he mistakenly takes as equivalent to the one in the source language. An example of this phenomenon is the translation of the word "đồng" in the Vietnamese phrase "huy chương đồng" into English. This Vietnamese phrase is so common (but so easily deceptive) that without pausing to think, the translator will render it into English as "copper medal". This is obviously a translation error; but errors of this kind should not be regarded as serious because they are no more than the consequence of translator's negligence brought about by the "false friends" pitfall. If the translator attempts to consult bilingual dictionaries for the English word corresponding to "đồng", he will find that most standard Vietnamese-English dictionaries, including the prestigious *Từ điển Việt-Anh* (Vietnamese-English Dictionary) by Bùi (2000, p. 677), will give him three translations: đồng$_1$ copper, brass, bronze, among which the first translation is often considered the most equivalent, "đồng" = "copper". And if the translator does the reverse, consulting *Từ điển Anh-Việt* (English-Vietnamese Dictionary) by Lê (1997, pp. 382-383), he will find that "copper" has only one equivalent translation, "copper" = "đồng". The choice of "copper" for "đồng" is re-ensured if the translator consults another entry "copper beech" and finds that the dictionary gives him "cây sồi lá màu đồng" as the equivalent translation. So "copper medal" must unquestionably be the equivalent translation of "huy chương đồng". In fact, "bronze medal" but not "copper medal" is the equivalent translation of "huy chương đồng" in sports register. This once again raises the problem of relying solely on dictionary equivalence.

4.3.7. Equivalent Correspondences and Variant Correspondences

The Russian translation theorist Jakob Retsker (1993) introduces two theoretical concepts to characterize the two aspects of translation equivalence: "equivalent correspondences" and "variant correspondences". In his formulation, the concept "equivalent correspondences" is employed in two senses. In the first sense, it refers to every correspondence to a word or a combination of words in the original in a given concrete context. And in the second sense, it means a constant, regular, context-free correspondence. Retsker notes that equivalent correspondences are something like catalysts in the process of translation and interpretation. They are the very units of translation which exhibit regular correspondences in the SL and the TL, which help the translator choose the item in the TL most equivalent to that in the SL, even when the item in the source language contains some unfamiliar words.

In contrast, the concept "variant correspondences" refers to those established between words when the TL offers several words to translate the meaning expressed or realized by one and the same word in the SL (Retsker, 1993, p. 25). Some examples that follow would suffice Retsker's view here. As a singular noun, the word "exercise" in

English has at least four correspondences in Vietnamese: (1) "bài tập", (2) "sự tập thể dục", (3) "sự luyện tập", and (4) "sự sử dụng, sự vận dụng"; and as a verb, the word "exercise" has at least five correspondences in Vietnamese: (1) "tập thể dục", (2) "luyện tập", (3) "sử dụng", (4) "làm cho băn khoăn, làm cho lo lắng", and (5) "thách thức buổi lễ". The adjective "little" in English can have four correspondences in Vietnamese: (1) "nhỏ", (2) "ngắn", (3) "ít", and (4) "không quan trọng". Similarly, the noun "dấu vết" in Vietnamese can have four correspondences in English: (1) "trace", (2) "sign", (3) "track", and (4) "vestige"; the adjective "cao" in Vietnamese can have at least four correspondences in English: (1) "tall", (2) "high", "lofty", and (4) "excellent, perfect, first-class".

Variant correspondences in translation can also be found in word combinations. Take the word "flying" and its possible collocations in English as an example. Normally "flying" corresponds to "đang bay" in Vietnamese. But, when collocated with different nouns, "flying" can correspond to many word combinations in Vietnamese such as "phi công" in "flying officer" (trung úy phi công), "cơ động" in "flying column" (đội quân cơ động), "rực rỡ" in "flying colors" (thành công rực rỡ), "cấp tốc" in "flying doctor" (bác sĩ cấp tốc), "ngắn" in "flying visit" (chuyến viếng thăm ngắn); or it may lose meaning as in "flying fox" (dơi quạ) and "flying picket" (công nhân xúi giục [đình công]). If considered these examples alone, one may be led to believe that more specific meanings prevail in Vietnamese. But it is not true. If one does the reverse, translating a word from Vietnamese into English, one might end up in similar results as the case of translating "flying" from English into Vietnamese.

The distinction between "equivalent correspondences" and "variant correspondences" is crucial in translation studies, but it does not seem to solve the problem of TE since all the items we have examined to demonstrate Retsker's view are words and phrases – the units below the clause level. If we take two texts in two languages, one being the translation of the other, we will recognize that the grammatical unit that is generally recognized as "equivalence" between the two languages is the "clause" (see Catford, 1965; Halliday, 1966a; Bell, 1991; Matthiessen, 2001; Hatim & Munday, 2004; Malmkjær, 2005; Hoang, 2022). The clause is the contextual unit of language which can operate in situations, can combine with other clauses to form a clause complex ("sentence" in traditional grammar), and can be broken down into groups/phrases, words, and morphemes – the overt elements that can help identify TE. But, as Halliday (1966a, p. 29) has aptly observed, this equivalence of units is lost as soon as we go below the clause. The further down the rank scale we go, the less is left of the equivalence. Once we reach the smallest unit, the morpheme, most vestige of equivalence disappears. The morpheme is (almost) untranslatable; and, it is very rare that a particular word in one language may always be translated by one and the same word in another language, and one word in one language is often the equivalent part of a word, or of several words in another language.

4.3.8. Context and Equivalence

The study of context and the way it affects translation equivalence has become a major concern of not only linguists but also translation scholars (e.g. Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988a, 1988b; Hatim & Mason, 1990; Bell, 1991; Retsker, 1993; G. Steiner, 1998; House, 1997, 2015; Halliday et al., 1964; Halliday, 1978, 2001, 2017b; Matthiessen, 2001; Hoang, 2005, 2006; and many others). It has been widely recognized in translation studies that context is an important vector, to use Halliday's (2001, 2017b) terminology, in understanding the

meaning of any text and for determining TE. But when it comes to the definition of what context is, opinions again differ and diversify, making the problem extremely complex.

Nida (1964, p. 243), for example, sees context as comprising "discourse context" and "communicative context". Discourse context refers to "the meaning of a particular unit, regardless of its extent, must be analysed in terms of a wider context of the total relevant discourse, whether this unit is a paragraph, section, chapter, or book. In other words, the immediate unit selected for analysis cannot be treated as a separate element; it must be considered as an integral part of the total discourse. Further, the meaning of the discourse as a whole must be analysed in terms of both content, i.e. the subject matter of the message, and form, e.g. epic poetry, legendary narrative, exposition or apocalyptic literature". Communicative context, on the other hand, is concerned with the meaning of a message which cannot be adequately analysed without considering the circumstances involved in the original communication, including such matters as time, place, author, audience, intent, and recorded response. Nida suggests that in studying the relationship of the source of the message, the translator has to analyse such factors as: (1) the background of the source (knowing something about the author is of great importance to decode his message); (2) the particular manner in which he produced his message, e.g. dictated, written by hand, written and then edited or dictated and then corrected by some amanuensis; (3) the factual background of the message, e.g. personal experience, data gathered from others, oral and/or written sources; and (4) the circumstances in the life of the source which prompted this particular communication. Nida (1964, p. 244) observes that the larger cultural context is of utmost importance in understanding the meaning of any message, because words have meaning only in terms of the total cultural setting, and a discourse must be related to the wider sphere of human and thought.

From another perspective, the Russian translation theorist Retsker (1993) classifies context into "objective setting" and "speech situation". Objective setting refers to the time and place of utterance. It consists of four components which go beyond the boundary of the text: (1) the personality of the author or speaker, (2) the source in which the original [SL text] has been published, (3) the addressee for whom the utterance is meant, and (4) the purpose of the translation, the expected effect it is supposed to have on the reader or listener. Speech situation, on the other hand, refers to "the situation and the conditions of the communication, the attitude the speaker exhibits towards the addressee, the surroundings they both find themselves in, and the general goal of the utterance" (Retsker, 1993, p. 27, citing Gak, 1969, p. 20).

Drawing on Jakobson's (1960) functions of the communication process, the American linguist, sociolinguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes (1964/1972) proposes a detailed model of situational context for analyzing communicative events, which can also be relevant to interlingual translation studies and practice. Hymes' model consists of ten parameters: (1) senders and receivers/addressors and addressees, (2) audience, (3) topic, (4) settings, (5) channels, (6) codes, (7) message-forms, (8) events, (9) key, and (10) purpose. According to Hymes, senders and receivers/addressors and addressees constitute what he later (1967) called the participants. Addressor refers to the speaker or writer, i.e., one who produces the utterance, and addressee refers to the hearer or reader, i.e., one who receives or decodes the utterance. Audience is the overhearer or unintended addressees. Topic tells us about

the range of language used. Setting refers to where (location or place) and when (time) the text or communicational interaction takes place. This also includes things like posture, gesture, and facial expression. Channel refers to how the contact between the participants is maintained: spoken or written, linguistic (i.e. by means of language) or non-linguistic (i.e. by means of signs or signals). Code refers to what language, or dialect or style of language being used. Message-form tells us about the forms intended; whether the piece of language is a sermon, a fairytale, a love story, a lecture, etc. Event tells us about the nature of the communicative event within which a text may be embedded. Key involves our evaluation (in this case we stand as the observers and evaluators of the text) of the text; i.e. whether the text is a good speech, a good lecture, or an interesting seminar on language teaching. And purpose refers to the outcome which the participants wish to happen.

From systemic functional linguistics perspective, "context" is viewed as an integral component part of the widely recognized four strata-model of language: context, semantics, lexicogrammar, and phonology/graphology (see Halliday, 1978; 1991, 2017b; Hasan & Perrett, 1994; Hasan, 2011; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Context encompasses "context of culture" and "context of situation", and within context of situation a distinction is made between "linguistic context" and "situational context".

Linguistic context is one in which the meaning of a linguistic unit: a word or a phrase can be determined by its relationship to surrounding units in a text. This type of meaning can be referred to as co-textual meaning (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, 1985) or "co-text" (to use Catford's 1965 terminology). Linguistic context helps the translator decipher (understand or guess) the meaning of the linguistic units (words, phrases, or sentences) that are encoded in the SL text and select the corresponding equivalent units in the TL translation. Without the help of linguistic context, translators, even competent ones, may find it difficult to find a word in any target language equivalent to the word "selective" in the English sentence "Nowadays admissions to American colleges and universities are very selective". Similarly, without the help of linguistic context, it would be difficult for any translator to find in any target language a phrase equivalent of the Vietnamese phrase "điếc ăn người" in the sentence "Hắn thường điếc ăn người". The main reason is that no bilingual dictionaries ever contain what Retsker (1993, p. 26) calls the "occasional meaning" of this phrase to tell the translator that "điếc ăn người" means, for example, "selectively deaf" in English.

Situational context is one in which the meaning of a linguistic unit is not determined solely by the elements surrounding it in the text, but, in many cases, by numerous factors outside the text itself. In translating, if the translator only sticks to the words, phrases or sentences of the SL text, he is sure not to render properly the following dialogue from English into any language, particularly Vietnamese, because much of "who is speaking to whom" is not explicated in it:

A: *Whatever are you doing up here?*

B: *I'm trying to repair the bell. I've been coming up here night after night for weeks now. You see, I was hoping to give you a surprise.*

A: *You certainly did give me a surprise! You've probably woken up everyone in the village as well. Still, I'm glad the bell is working again.*

(Adapted from Alexander, 1976, p. 14)

The eminent British linguist John R. Firth (1957, p. 182), who laid the foundation

for systemic functional linguistics and modern pragmatics, offers a model of situational context (which he calls "context of situation") which consists of three abstract parameters:

A. The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities.
   (i) The verbal action of the participants.
   (ii) The non-verbal action of the participants.
B. The relevant objects.
C. The effect of the verbal action.

Drawing on insights from Malinowski's (1923, 1935) notion of "context of culture" and Firth's model of "context of situation", Halliday et al. (1964), Halliday (1978), and Halliday and Hasan (1985) introduce the notion of "register" to account for the features of a text at the level of context of situation which is highly relevant to interlingual translation theory and translation practice (Hatim & Mason, 1990; E. Steiner, 1998; Hoang, 2018, 2022) in general and to determining TE in particular. Halliday et al. (1964) and Halliday (1978) argue that domains of language behaviour are defined as a unified cluster of purposes in recognized sphere of activity. Each domain can further reveal the functional variations by introducing the concept "register". These registers differ from profession to profession, vocation to vocation. Halliday et al. (1964) maintain that the notion of register is based on the social fact of what people do with their language. It is language variety used in social activity in a different situation. It has been defined quite explicitly as being a characterization of texts in respect of their formal linguistic properties.

In Halliday et al.'s (1964) formulation, register is a functional variety of language. It is characterized by three contextual categories: field of discourse, tenor (originally "style") of discourse, and mode of discourse. Field of discourse refers to what is going on, to the area of operation of language activity. Under this heading, registers are classified according to the nature of the whole event of which the language activity forms part. In this type of situation in which language activity accounts for practically the whole of the relevant activity, such as an essay, a discussion or an academic seminar, the field of discourse is the subject-matter. On this dimension of classification, we can recognize registers such as politics and personal relations, and technical registers like biology or mathematics. Tenor of discourse is concerned with the relations among the participants. To the extent that these affect and determine features of language, they suggest a primary distinction between colloquial and polite. This dimension is unlikely ever to yield clearly defined, discrete registers. It is best treated as a cline, and various more delicate cuts have been suggested. And mode of discourse refers to the medium or mode of the language activity and it is this that determines, or rather correlates with, the role played by the language activity in the situation. The primary distinction on this dimension is that into spoken and written language, the two having, by and large, different situational roles. Halliday et al. (1964, p. 93) state: "It is the product of these three dimensions of classification that we can best define and identify register". They note, however, that the criteria are not absolute or independent; they are all variables in delicacy, and the more delicate the classification the more the three overlap. The formal properties of any given language event will be those associated with the intersection of the appropriate field, tenor, and mode. Many scholars, both systemic functional and non-systemic functional, (e.g. Catford, 1965; Gregory, 1980; Hatim & Mason, 1990; Matthiessen, 2001; E. Steiner, 1998, 2001, 2004; Taylor, 1998) claim that studies in

register analysis are relevant to translators of all kinds, because "The establishment of register equivalence can be seen […] as the major factor in the process of translation; the problems of establishing such equivalence, a crucial test of the limits of translatability" (Gregory 1980, p. 466).

5. TE in Broader Contexts: Three Approaches to TE

The above discussion clearly shows that the concept of TE has been employed in so many different senses that it is impossible to capture it in any single definition. In what follows, I will attempt to examine TE in broader contexts, looking at this concept from the point of view of three approaches current in translation theories which I would refer to respectively as (1) the linguistic approach to TE, (2) the communicative approach to TE, and (3) the translational approach to TE.

5.1. The Linguistic Approach to TE

The linguistic approach to TE is said to be associated with the studies by the British linguist and translation scholar Ian Catford (1965, 1967, 1989) and the prominent German translation scholar Weiner Koller (1979, 1989, 1995).

5.1.1. Catford

In a paper on linguistics and machine translation written in 1960 and reprinted in McIntosh and Halliday (1966), Halliday made the following guiding suggestion for bridging a general linguistic theory to translation studies:

> It might be of interest to set up a linguistic model of the translation process starting not from any preconceived notions from outside the field of language study, but on the basis of linguistic concepts such as are relevant to the description of languages as modes of activity in their own right. (Halliday, 1966b, p. 137)

It is precisely Halliday's idea that Catford (1965) has taken up as the goal of his book entitled *A linguistic theory of translation*. In this "lucid, succinct and penetrating little book" (Gregory, 1980, p. 460), Catford has developed his linguistic theory of translation, setting it particularly within the compass of Halliday's (1961) early version of the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) model. Catford has fruitfully categorised a number of concepts such as translation equivalence, formal correspondence, textual equivalence, transference, translation shifts between levels, word classes, units (rank-shifts), structure, system, meaning, and so on (for more detail, see Catford, 1965, 1989; see also Newmark, 1988a; Malmkjær, 2005; Halliday, 2017b, p. 106).

TE is a central concept in Catford's theory of translation. As with Halliday (1966a), Newmark (1988a), Bell (1991), and Malmkjær (2005), Catford sees the sentence (the 'clause' in the current SFL model) as the unit in which TE can be established. He distinguishes between TE as an empirical phenomenon and TE as a theoretical consideration. Empirically, Catford (1965, p. 27) suggests, TE can be discovered by comparing SL text and TL text; and theoretically, TE can be discovered by establishing the underlying conditions, or justification, of TE.

Discussing TE as an empirical phenomenon, Catford (1965) classifies equivalence into "formal correspondence" and "textual equivalence". Formal correspondence is any category in the TL such as unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc. which occupies the same position in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL. He aptly observes that every language is unique; its categories are defined in terms of

relations holding within the language itself. For this reason, formal correspondence is always approximate. Textual equivalence refers to any TL form (text or part of text) which is observed to be equivalent to a given SL form (text or part of text). According to Catford (1965), textual equivalence can be discovered through a comparison of the source text with the target text and by using "the authority of a competent bilingual informant or translator" (p. 27). To find the French textual equivalent of the English textual segment *My son is six*, for example, the researcher can ask a competent English-French translator to put it into French. If the competent translator supplies *Mon fils a six ans*, the researcher then can say that it is the textual equivalent of the English original *My son is six*. Suppose in an English text, there are a number of mentions of *My son*, and the translator renders all these mentions into French as *Mon fils*, the researcher can firmly confirm that *Mon fils* is the textual equivalent of *My son*. Another way of discovering a textual translation equivalent is to adopt what Catford (1965, p. 28) refers to as *commutation* (italics in original) and observation of concomitant variation. In this technique, the researcher may systematically introduce changes into the SL segment and observe what changes if any occur in the TL segment as a consequence. Catford suggests that a textual translation equivalent is the segment of the TL text which is changed when and only when a given segment of the SL text is changed. A simple exercise for discovering a translation equivalent in this case is that the researcher replaces all mentions of *My son* by *Your daughter* in the text and asks the translator to translate *Your daughter is six* into French. The target text this time is *Votre fille a six ans*. If all mentions of *My daughter* are translated into French as *Votre fille*, the changed segment of the French text *Mon fils*/*Votre fille* can then be firmly taken as equivalent of the changed segment of the English original text *My son/Your daughter*. Catford notes that in simple cases, one can rely on one's own knowledge of languages involved. This is the only thing one can do with recorded text when the original translator is not present. In such a case, the researcher acts as his own informant and discovers textual equivalents intuitively without going through an overt procedure of commutation. Catford (1965) suggests that commutation is the ultimate test for textual equivalence; it is useful in cases where equivalence is not of simple equal-rank and unit-to-unit type as *My son* and *Your daughter* as illustrated above.

Discussing TE as a theoretical consideration, Catford observes:

> The SL (source language) and TL (target language) items rarely have 'the same meaning' in the linguistic sense; but they can function in the same situation, SL and TL texts or items are translation equivalents when they are *interchangeable in a given situation* (italics in original). (Catford, 1965, p. 49)

What Catford actually means is that meaning is language-specific. Therefore, TE can only be understood as denotative equivalence, not equivalence in meaning. As with Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1956), Catford sees a language as a closed system sealed off from other languages. He observes that linguistically, a unit of the SL and a unit of the TL are rarely of the same meaning. However, in comparable interlingual contexts of situation, they can be used in similar referential functions: the SL units and TL units are considered to be equivalent if they are interchangeable in a given situation. Catford (1965, p. 49) suggests that the interchangeability of situation can mostly be achieved at the level of the clause, because, as he explains, the clause is the basic grammatical unit of language use – the idea widely shared by many SFL scholars (e.g. Halliday, 1978, 1985a, 1985b, 1998;

Butt et al., 2000; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014; and Hoang, 2021, 2022). Below is the English clause and the German translation Catford (1967, p. 133) provides to illustrate his point.

English: *The Milkman hasn't come this morning.*

German: *Der Milchmann ist heute morgen nicht gekommen.*

According to Catford (1967), the English and German clauses represent comparable communicative situations; therefore, they can be said to be equivalent to each other. However, the German translation does not indicate what part of the day the utterance was spoken: morning or afternoon, or evening. In this case, if a back-translation from German into English is performed, the English back-translated version would be *The milkman didn't come this morning*. Based on the result of the above analysis, Catford concludes that the contextual meaning of the source and target language units is not always the same, because in establishing equivalence, translators must always be based on macro-textual or contextual information. This explains why semantic ambiguity often occurs in the TL text. He suggests that the question under what circumstances and to what extent the macro-textual features are appropriate for translation can only be answered in a specific text. This leads to the fact that the quality of a translation depends on a number of situational characteristics which can be clarified during the translation process. Catford provides the condition for TE which reads as follows:

> translation equivalence occurs when an SL and a TL text or item are relatable to (or at least some of) the same features of substance. (Catford, 1965, p. 50)

But whether there are rules for translation equivalence still seems to be an open issue. Catford states:

> Provided the sample is big enough, translation-equivalence probabilities may be generalized to form 'translation rules' applicable to other texts, and perhaps to the 'language as a whole'. (Catford, 1965, p. 31)

It can be said in summary that *A Linguistic theory of translation* is a wonderfully rich contribution to translation theory in general and translation equivalence study in particular. Its author – Ian Catford has developed a very comprehensive picture of translation by systematically examining it in the light of a general theory of language – systemic functional linguistics (SFL). His theory of translation can serve as a basis for any scholar who wants to expand his account in the light of new theoretical developments and descriptive findings of SFL (cf. Matthiessen, 2001, p. 43).

5.1.2. Koller

Among the scholars who study TE, the German translation theorist Koller (1979, 1989, 1995 and elsewhere) has perhaps offered the most comprehensive account (cf. House, 2015). In his publication entitled *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft* (Research into the Science of Translation), Koller (1979) proceeds by examining the concept of "equivalence" and its linked term "correspondence" (which closely resemble Catford's (1965) concepts of "formal correspondence" and "textual equivalence"). Correspondence, according to Koller (1979), lies in the area of comparative linguistics (see Ellis, 1966; Halliday, 1966b, 2001, 2017b). In establishing formal correspondences, the researcher is suggested to compare two linguistic systems and then to establish the similarities and differences between the two languages. The comparative parameters are those belonging to de Saussure's (1983) plane of *langue*. The examples Koller provides to illustrate his point are the identification of the

transference of syntactic, morphological, and phonological transference markers from the SL to the TL text. Textual equivalence, in contrast, is concerned with equivalent units in SL text and TL text pairs and contexts. The parameters for determining TE belong to de Saussure's (1983) plane of *parole*. In Koller's view

> while knowledge of correspondences is indicative of competence in the foreign language, it is knowledge and ability in equivalences that are indicative of competence in translation. (Koller, 1979, p. 185, as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 75)

In discussing equivalence, Koller (1989, 1995) maintains that the concept of equivalence postulates a relation between SL text (or text element) and TL text (or text element). He suggests that equivalence should be defined in terms of "the frame and the *conditions* to which one refers when using the concept of equivalence" (Koller, 1989, p. 100). Koller makes a *normative* statement of TE which reads as follows:

> there exists equivalence between a given source text and a given target text if the target text fulfils certain requirements with respect to these frame conditions. The relevant conditions are those having to do with such aspects as content, style, function, etc. (Koller, 1989, p. 100)

Proceeding from this normative statement, Koller provides a five-factor framework necessary for determining the equivalence of a TL text to the SL text:

> (1) The *extralinguistic content* transmitted by a text: the kind of equivalence oriented towards this factor is called *denotative equivalence*. It refers to the kind of equivalence oriented towards 'invariance of content' or 'invariance at content level'; its central concern is the lexicon (the words and syntagma in a language).
> (2) The *connotations* or *connotative equivalence* transmitted by means of the word choice, (especially where there is a specific choice between synonymous expressions) with respect to level of style (register), the social and geographical dimension, frequency, etc.
> (3) The *text and language norms* (usage norms) for given text types or *text-normative equivalence* relates to text-type specific features.
> (4) The *receiver* (reader) to whom the translation is directed or *pragmatic equivalence* refers to the TL receptor's response. This type of equivalence is similar to Nida's (1964) "dynamic equivalence".
> (5) Certain formal-aesthetic features of SL text or *formal equivalence* refers to the production of an "analogy of form" in the translation by exploiting the formal possibilities in the TL or even by creating new forms if necessary. It is the kind of equivalence which relates to textual characteristics such as the form of the text, word play, and individual stylistic features.
>
> (Koller, 1989, pp. 100-101)

In short, in Koller's view, a TL text is judged to be equivalent to the SL text when it achieves denotative equivalence, connotative equivalence, text-normative equivalence, pragmatic equivalence, and formal equivalence.

5.2. The Communicative Approach to TE

The communicative approach to TE is associated with the eminent American linguist and translation scholar Eugene Nida.

Unlike several of his contemporaries who express doubt about the problem of translatability, Nida (1964) and Nida in Nida and Taber (1982, p. 4) state explicitly that "anything that can be said in one language can be said in another" language with reasonable accuracy by establishing equivalent points of reference in the receptor's culture and by matching his cognitive framework through the restructuring of the constitutive parts of the message (cf. Hoang 2005, p. 65). Nida (1975) points out that untranslatability has often been discussed in terms of absolute rather than relative equivalence. If Catford (1965) drew on Halliday's early version of the SFL model to develop his linguistic theory of translation, Nida based himself primarily on Chomsky's (1957, 1965) early theory of transformational generative (TG) grammar to develop his translation model. In *Toward a science of translating* (1964) and *The theory and practice of translation* co-authored with Taber (1982), Nida has brought translation within the compass of a science by integrating translation studies into linguistics and communication, focusing in particular on the universal features of human language, and the subsequent semantic and pragmatic works.

Another point of interest in Nida's theory of translation is that he has shifted away from the traditional view that a word has a written form and a fixed meaning towards a functional view that a word has meaning through context and its meaning can create different responses in different cultures. Nida classifies meaning into linguistic meaning, referential meaning (denotative meaning as usually indicated in dictionaries) and emotive or connotative meaning. As a linguist who is deeply influenced by ideas of American descriptive linguistics and then of TG grammar, Nida develops his new theory of translation by presenting a series of techniques for discovering meaning. The goal is to help researchers, especially translators, define different linguistic units, clarify ambiguities in the SL, and identify cultural differences to eventually achieve the "closest natural equivalence" in the SL and the TL. In addition, Nida develops a number of techniques for identifying referential and emotive meaning and for analyzing semantic structure (for more detail, see Nida, 1964, pp. 84-85, 95; see also Hoang, 2006, 2022).

Unlike Jakobson and other translation scholars, Nida does not seem to be concerned about equivalence-related concepts such as "literal translation", "free translation" and "faithful translation"; and unlike Catford, Nida does not distinguish between "formal correspondence" and "textual equivalence". In his theory of translation, Nida (1964, p. 159) proposes two types of similarities which he refers to respectively as "formal equivalence" and "dynamic equivalence". The implication of this distinction is that there is never absolute TE. What the translator tries to do is to search for the "closest natural equivalent of the source-language message" (Nida & Taber, 1982, p. 12). In Nida's formulation, formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In this type of equivalence, attention is paid to the nearest possible symmetry between the linguistic elements in the TL (Nida calls it "receptor language") and the corresponding linguistic elements in the SL (Nida, 1964, p. 159). In other words, formal equivalence in Nida's formulation is oriented towards the SL structure, making an influence on determining the accuracy of the structure of the translated text in the TL. The most typical of this type of equivalence is what he calls "gloss translation", in which the linguistic structure of the SL text is preserved in the linguistic structure of the TL translation, accompanied by a footnote explaining the meaning. In contrast, dynamic equivalence refers to what Nida (1964, p. 159, citing Rieu and Phillips,

1954), calls "the principle of equivalent effect", in which the relationship between the TL receptor and the TL message must essentially be the same as the relationship which existed between the SL receptor and the SL message. In other words, dynamic equivalence translation is directed more towards equivalence of receptor language audience's response than towards equivalence of form (see Hoang, 2005, pp. 66-7). Thus, for Nida a translation which is judged to be "the closest natural equivalent" to the SL text must be the one that matches (1) the receptor language and culture as a whole, (2) the context of the particular message, and (3) the receptor-language audience (see Nida, 1964, p. 167).

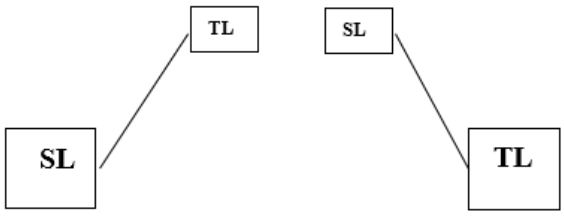
Nida's approach to TE which is oriented towards the TL receptor is typical of the approach to communicative translation. It allows the translator to alter grammatical structure, vocabulary and basic grammatical relationships to achieve naturalness; and the transference from the SL and the "foreignness" of the SL context to the TL can be minimized (Nida, 1964, pp. 166-168). This approach is similar to Catford's (1965) which views TE as an empirical phenomenon. The main difference lies in that while Catford wants to know if a language unit of a SL text is equivalent to a language unit of a TL translation by asking the competent bilingual or translator, Nida advocates asking the audience in the receptor language if the translation achieves similar communicative effect in the TL – a view of TE which can invite further discussion (for more detail see Hoang, 2022).

5.3. The Translational Approach to TE

The translational approach to TE can be attributed to the two German translation scholars Albrecht Neubert (1968, 1989) and Wolfram Wilss (1982a, 1982b). This approach is based on the assumption that the text to be translated has different degrees of translatability. This can be seen in that a relatively untranslatable text may contain some optimally translatable segments (sentences, paragraphs, or passages); and conversely, an optimally translatable text may contain some untranslatable segments (sentences, paragraphs, or passages). The fact that some segments of an SL text are translatable while some others are not shows that the translation of a text may facilitate the translator on the one hand and cause problems to him on the other. These problems may entail a correlational imbalance between an SL text and a TL translation which can be presented diagrammatically in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Imbalance in Translation (Wilss, 1982a, p. 150)



Neubert (1968) and Wilss (1982a) emphasize the need for a theory of translation to handle equivalence relations. They argue that the problem of the imbalance in TE is caused mainly by the style (form) and content (meaning) of text. When these linguistic factors interact with two other non-linguistic factors derived from the translator's subjectivity: "undertranslation" and "overtranslation", the loss of information and the surplus of information in translation (caused by the translator) may occur. This can result in six types or degrees of imbalanced translation:

1. a translation which lacks content
2. a translation which lacks style
3. a translation which lacks both content and style
4. a translation which exceeds content
5. a translation which exceeds style
6. a translation which exceeds both content and style.

Neubert (1968) notes that the translator works with *de facto* existing texts, and in actual translation he must cope with specific text types, using specific transfer strategies. This is why it is important to classify texts according to their degree of translatability. Neubert tentatively groups texts into four categories as follows:

1. exclusive SL-oriented texts: texts in the field of area studies
2. primarily SL-oriented texts: literary texts
3. SL- and TL-oriented texts: scientific/technical or language for specific purposes texts
4. primarily or exclusively TL-oriented texts: texts intended for propaganda abroad.

What seems to have been well established in translation practice is that if ten translators of one and the same language are asked to translate a text from one source language into their own, they will surely produce ten different versions of translation. However, if one looks carefully into their translations, one can find somewhere in the ten translated versions there is what (Popovič, 1976) refers to as "invariant core", which can be said to be equivalent to the SL text. This invariant core is reflected in basic and constant semantic elements in the text; its existence can be demonstrated by semantic condensation which can be recognized by conducting an empirical test; i.e. by comparing the SL text with the TL text(s) or by asking a competent bilingual or translator (cf. Catford, 1965). Core invariant content, therefore, is part of a dynamic relationship. It should not be confused with what has often been referred to as the "essence", "spirit" or "soul" of the text. From this point of view of translation practice, Neubert (1968) suggests that one should base oneself on the "core invariant content" of the translated versions to compare them with that of the SL text to establish equivalences between the TL text(s) and the SL text.

Like Jakobson (2004) and Nida (1964, 1975), Neubert and Wilss see translation as lying in the realm of semiotics. The criteria for TE, they suggest, must comprise syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components; and among these components, semantic equivalence should be given priority over syntactic equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence modifies the other two. According to Neubert and Wilss, TE overall should be determined by three parameters: (1) the relationship between signs themselves, (2) the relationship between signs and what they stand for, and (3) the relationship between signs, what they stand for, and those who use them (for more detail, see Wilss, 1982a; see also Bassnett-McGuire, 2002).

6. Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have attempted to make an inquiry into some fractions of the current knowledge of interlingual translation theory and practice. I began my inquiry by examining in some detail Roman Jakobson's triadic system of translation in which the concept of "interlingual translation" is located and defined. Then, seeing interlingual translation as a complex social semiotic act of communication, I strove to explore the interlingual translation process, starting it from the source message/text producer (speaker/writer) who sends the message/text to the translator/interpreter (who is both source message/text receiver and target message/text producer), and ending it at the receiver (listener or reader) of the target message/text translation. Realizing that all the attempts made by interlingual translation theorists and practitioners so far have aimed at one ultimate goal: equivalence of the TL translation to the SL text, I raised the question, "Is there equivalence between a SL text and a TL translation?". In answer,

I presented two conflicting views: the "no" view of TE and the "yes" view of TE. Then I examined in some detail the concept of TE from both micro and macro perspectives. From the micro perspective, I explored TE and other translation equivalence-related concepts which are often used as criteria for determining TE of the TL translation to the SL text: "dictionary equivalence", "foreignising and domesticating translation and equivalence", "accuracy and equivalence", "adequacy and equivalence", "communicative effect and equivalence", "'false friends' and equivalence", "equivalent correspondences and variant correspondences", and "context and equivalence". And from the macro perspective, I explored how TE is conceptualized in three approaches current in translation theory and practice: the linguistic approach to TE, the communicative approach to TE, and the translational approach to TE.

It can be seen from my study that interlingual translation is a very complex social semiotic process, involving the participation of so many factors. It can also be seen from my study that TE is an extremely complex concept, perhaps one of the most problematic and controversial concepts in interlingual translation studies: it has been analysed, evaluated and discussed from different points of view; it has been approached from many different perspectives; in fact, the term TE has been employed in so many different senses that recently it has been denied by some translation scholars (e.g. Wilss, 1982b; Munday, 2016; Baker, 2018) any value, or even any legitimate status in interlingual translation theory. But judging from what is going on in the field, it is my view that the complexity of the problem of the interlingual translation process and the diversity of opinions on the concept of TE do not mean that scholars have complicated the problem. Rather, they have really contributed to the advancement of knowledge in the field, not with the intention of a final verdict, but as food for thought and invaluable reference material for future research, making interlingual translation – "probably one of most complex types of event yet produced in the evolution of cosmos" (Richards, 1953, as cited in Brislin, 1976, p. 79) – an ever-moving academic discipline.

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DỊCH LIÊN NGÔN: MỘT CỐ GẮNG NHẬN DIỆN MỘT SỐ KHÁI NIỆM CƠ BẢN

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết dự định xem xét một vài phần nhỏ lẻ trong nghiên cứu dịch liên ngôn. Bài viết bắt đầu bằng việc khám phá mô hình tam phân của học giả Roman Jakobson trong đó dịch liên ngôn là một bộ phận cấu thành. Sau đó, bài viết trình bày chi tiết quá trình dịch liên ngôn. Phần trình bày này được tiếp nối bằng hai mục trong đó khái niệm cốt lõi trong lí luận và thực hành dịch liên ngôn là "tương đương dịch thuật", một số khái niệm liên quan khác, và ba cách tiếp cận tương đương dịch thuật chính được nghiên cứu. Bài viết cho thấy rõ ràng rằng dịch liên ngôn là một quá trình kí hiệu xã hội rất phức tạp, và khái niệm tương đương dịch thuật được sử dụng theo nhiều nghĩa khác nhau đến mức mà gần đây một số nhà nghiên cứu đã phủ nhận bất kì giá trị nào, thậm chí bất kì vị thế hợp pháp nào của nó trong lí thuyết và thực hành dịch. Tuy nhiên, dựa vào những gì đang diễn ra trong lĩnh vực nghiên cứu dịch liên ngôn, bài viết cho rằng sự phức tạp của quá trình dịch liên ngôn và các quan điểm đa dạng về khái niệm tương đương dịch thuật không có nghĩa là các học giả đã làm phức tạp vấn đề. Thay vào đó, họ đã thực sự đóng góp vào sự tiến bộ của kiến thức trong lĩnh vực này, không phải với mục đích đưa ra phán quyết cuối cùng, mà là những gợi ý đáng suy nghĩ và những tài liệu tham khảo quý báu để nghiên cứu sâu hơn, làm cho lí luận và thực hành dịch liên ngôn trở là một ngành học luôn luôn vận động.

Từ khóa: dịch liên ngôn, quá trình dịch liên ngôn, tương đương dịch thuật và các khái niệm liên quan, ba cách tiếp cận tương đương dịch thuật trong dịch liên ngôn