

This article was published V. I. Khairouline & Z. M. Ganeeva & N. A. Vailstchenko & Z. A. Yusupova & A. R. Shaimukhametova (eds). *Translation and Country Studies*. Ufa: Bashkir State University. 9-23 [227]

LEXICAL EQUIVALENTS AND ADEQUACY IN TRANSLATION

Cay Dollerup, Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract

Firstly, this article emphasises that translators, in the broad sense of the word, work in systems which define their working conditions, including access to dictionaries. Bilingual dictionaries loom large in discussions of adequacy and equivalence. The article defines lexical equivalents as words with the ‘same’ meaning in the source and target languages according to an ‘authority’, usually a bilingual dictionary. Adequate renditions convey “the meaning of the source text in the target language in a given situation.”

Using the author’s student notes from dictionaries and subtitles from present-day television serials, the discussion first of all focuses on the adequacy or inadequacy of lexical equivalents. Noting that the two concepts discussed are not mutually exclusive, the focus is gradually shifted to adequacy. The article illustrates how many factors, including the translator’s creativity, a proper understanding of the source culture and its expressions, and familiarity with social systems and history all have a bearing on the success or failure of a translation (or subtitle). Acronyms are dealt with specifically, since they raise questions of audience comprehension in both the source and target cultures.

Key-words: dictionaries; lexical equivalents; acronyms; translator creativity; subtitling

Introductory comments

Although this article draws on personal experience and observation, the topic in hand is central to translation work as well as to Translation Studies. In both areas, bilingual dictionaries loom large no matter whether this is recognised or not, and, at the same time, a concern with *adequacy* – or whatever other term scholars use to designate this problem – in the target language are of paramount importance to target audiences, and consequently to translators, translation critics, and Translation Studies. In this article, translation is defined as any activity which conveys the linguistic aspect of a message to a target audience. Translation in this sense encompasses written translation, interpreting, subtitling, voice-overs, and so on.

First of all, we must take a close look at translators and the societies or ‘systems’ in which they work. The concept of ‘systems’ is a term I introduced in *Basics in Translation Studies*, the Romanian edition of which (2006) was reviewed by Professor Vladimir Khairouline in www.language-international.net.

The fact that translators must always bow to what is accepted by and acceptable in the target languages has long been recognised by scholars of Translation Studies. However, many scholars continue to speak of translation as though only literary texts were translated. According to such views, this is the main domain for translation, although, in reality, literature comprises less than 0.1% of all translation activity worldwide. It is sometimes even assumed that translators work only with books that they themselves like, or which they have chosen for translation. Such scholars appear to be unaware that all literary translators, including the most prestigious, are commissioned by publishing houses. No publishing house will acquire the rights to a national translation unless it is reasonably confident that a work stands a good chance of making a profit to justify the necessary investment in translation, printing and distribution. In other words, target societies have a number of means of evaluating whether a foreign book is worth translating or not – and this also goes for literary masterpieces.

A similar type of control is applied both to those materials which are ultimately translated and to materials which are rejected. In the days of the Soviet Union, it was not only Western political extremist views that never made it into Russian translation; obscure Western Communist authors were promoted, while several prominent Western fiction writers never had their works translated into Russian.

In the same fashion, a computer manual will never be translated into a given language unless the brand in question is sold to the native speakers of that language.

I believe that the concept of 'systems in which translators work' is useful in promoting stringent observations. There are systems at all levels, and all of these are different: nations are systems determined by boundaries and governed by political bodies whose influence is insignificant in some contexts and obvious in others; cultures are systems, all of which translators must be cognizant – although the degree of familiarity will vary according to the specific requirements of the (lower-level) systems in which the translators work; languages comprise yet other systems which sometimes coincide with regional and national boundaries but often extend beyond them; and so on.

While the powers that be may determine what can be or should be translated in the systems over which they hold sway – and scholars of Translation Studies must be (vaguely) aware of this – the actual task of translation is carried out by translators. They work in specific systems which define and determine which texts they should translate: a distributor of lawnmowers will employ a technical translator, not a literary translator, and by the same token, a publisher will not ask a technical translator to translate a literary work.

The tools and systems

The 'systems in which translators work' also determine the tools translators have at their disposal: a newly-fledged translator in a developing country is unlikely to possess even a modest dictionary, whereas experienced translators at the European Parliament which, at the time of writing, encompasses 27 nations and 23 languages, can call on a daunting array of tools to solve translation problems. Time also has a bearing on the tools available: today's bilingual dictionaries are infinitely better than they were two centuries ago.

Translators and texts

Having sketched the societal and social macro-levels, I will now turn to what appears to be the micro-level in my present context, namely the material with which translators work. Translators work with language. In most tongues, this is divided into smaller units by scholars, teachers, and many laymen. Using Indo-European languages as a model, we may distinguish between various units and set up a kind of hierarchy which, moving from smaller to larger units, comprises:

Words

Idioms and phrases

Sentences

Periods

Paragraphs

Sections, Parts, Chapters, etc.

– until, eventually, the target audience has received the linguistic text in its entirety with some kind of beginning, middle and end.

Discussion

For those who prefer the exactness of the natural sciences, this framework is not precise enough. They will point out that some languages compose meaning without differentiating between words, and that 'words' are not identical with semantic units. Russian, for instance, does not use articles,

whereas English distinguishes between definite and indefinite articles, the latter even having two forms. Unlike Germanic and Romance languages, Russian has aspects in verbs. Chinese verbs are not inflected; they do not indicate tense, and in no way reveal whether the subject is singular or plural. There is no distinction between ‘he’ and ‘she’ when pronounced properly in standard Chinese (although the words are different in written Chinese characters). Other languages have other language-specific characteristics.

The material in hand

To a Russian audience, it may seem strange that I can easily adduce an abundance of examples for the discussion of translation. The explanation is simple: I live in one of the most translating societies in the world. Denmark is a small country without natural resources, and consequently Danes have always had to import goods and trades from abroad, including many foreign words designating the new phenomena such as ‘munk’ (monk, from Latin), ‘slagter’ (butcher, from German), and ‘jeans’ (from English) to select a few examples which span more than a millennium in the history of the Danish language.

This easy access to translations is demonstrated to me every evening, since about 80% of the programmes on Danish television are subtitled. Subtitling allows me to listen to the soundtrack in English, while at the same time reading the Danish subtitles. I am thus force-fed with translation. Being a Translation Studies scholar, I can assess what Danish viewers actually receive.

The majority of the examples below are drawn from television films and plays, including detective stories and a serial set in Britain during the Second World War (1939-1945) which, in Russia, merged with the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). Most of the examples cited are rooted in short-term memory: I noted them down the moment I realised they were worth studying. I cannot guarantee that are verbatim transcripts, but only that they illustrate the phenomena under review. In order to highlight the issues discussed, I have had no qualms about shortening the source and target examples in order to obtain a better focus.

Lexical equivalents and adequacy

The points of departure are ‘lexical equivalents and ‘adequacy’, since, at first glance, these would appear to represent two opposite extremes in approaches to translation.

Given the fact that bilingual dictionaries are constantly changing (although editors usually copy from one another extensively), the only sensible definition of lexical equivalents is that they are words or phrases which are identified as having the ‘same’ meaning in the source and target languages according to an ‘authority’ accepted by the translator. Today, these authorities are found in bilingual dictionaries, whether in printed form or on the Internet. We can thus use any bilingual dictionary to identify the precise lexical equivalents in a given translational context. At the other extreme is adequacy, which I have defined as a “rendition which conveys the meaning of the source text in the target language in a given situation” (*Basics*, Chapter 4).

I shall be moving along the line between the two concepts in order to illustrate the many different aspects of ‘adequacy’, and what distinguishes the ‘adequate’ from the ‘inadequate’ translation, as well as from one which is downright ‘wrong’. Many factors, not least the critic’s personal views, will have a bearing on the question of what may be considered an ‘adequate’ rendition in a given context. Some of these factors will be mentioned in the following discussion.

Lexical equivalents

I still possess books from my student days, in the margins of which I had noted the lexical equivalents of words I did not readily know. The dictionary I used was at the time the best and most

expensive bilingual dictionary in Denmark; according to traditional and experienced translator wisdom, its authority was beyond dispute.

Firstly, here are two examples to illustrate how it served me well in the learning stage of my life:

“I was kind of *rattled* ...” [DK: nervøs (GB: upset)]

“a claim that *petered out* ...” [DK: løbe ud i sandet (GB: came to nothing)]

This dictionary also listed marginal equivalents which were adequate in Danish. In this respect it was better than *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*:

“After much *chaffering* I got our stones at a thousand apiece.” [DK lexical equivalent: prutten (GB back-translation: haggling)]

“It is in the *lowliest* manifestations that pleasure can be derived.” [DK l.e.: ydmygeste (GB b-tr.: most humble)]

In other cases, the lexical equivalents were not precisely on target, although they might share ‘the semantic sphere’ of the English word or phrase:

“the police reports laid more stress on the *platitudes* of magistrates than on details” [DK: plathed (GB b-tr. coarseness)] in which the adequate rendition would be “almindeligheder” (GB: trite comments)]

“He would be mad if I wanted to join a Sunday school treat” [DK: børneselskab, traktement (GB: children’s party, event at which you have something to eat and drink)]. In context, the English word corresponds to “komsammen, sammenkomst” (GB: get-together)]

Of course, dictionaries may occasionally be wide of the mark with regard to any kind of adequacy, but it is a compliment to my guide into the mysterious world of words that I do not find any example of downright wrong equivalents among ‘my’ dictionary notes.

However, I do find an example of an equivalent which was inadequate in the larger linguistic context of the story in question:

“You will find an extra *tumbler* upon the sideboard.” [DK: ølglas (GB: glass for beer)]. This identification was inappropriate in view of a previous remark:

“I shall have a whisky and soda.” The meaning was clearly “a glass for any kind of drink.”

Inadequate lexical equivalents

Let it first be noted that many people concerned with translation often fail to notice that lexical or ‘literally correct’ renditions can be misleading, since discrepancies in the source text can become glaring and incongruous in translation. I can offer no explanation for this phenomenon, but I can exemplify it by means of an exchange in which a desperate girl confides in a policewoman:

“You are the only one I can talk to”. This is subtitled as:

“Du er den eneste jeg kan tale med”.

The subtitle makes the ambiguity already present in the source speech even more glaring: the Danish subtitle should have added a word like “åbent” or “frit” (GB: openly, freely). As it stands, the girl’s statement is absurd since she clearly can talk to and actually speaks with (“kan tale med”) many people in the film; the point is that she confides (“kan tale åbent med”) only in the policewoman.

Adequacy

Adequacy and lexical equivalents

The dictionary will sometimes indicate that some equivalent is not quite on target although it is the best one available. The British “Home Guard” is thus the only but not exact equivalent of the Danish “hjemmeværn”. The similarities are enough to explain the dictionary’s choice: both corps are manned by volunteers not in actual military service to form a second line of defence. But fundamentally they are two different corps: whereas the British “Home Guard” was active in 1941-44, the Danish hjemmeværn was founded in 1945 by former fighters in the resistance movement after Denmark had been liberated from the Nazi occupation. Its purpose was explicitly to avoid a repetition of the instant and humiliating surrender of Denmark when the Nazis invaded the country on 9th April 1940. By rendering the ‘Home Guard’ as ‘hjemmeværnet’ some subtle historical overtones are not transferred and new are added; they are the still closest lexical and semantic equivalents one can get in the two cultures involved.

Most people with any insight into translation would have some view concerning the following examples both from a television serial set in the Second World War:

In one episode we are told that “the nearest spitfire is 200 miles away”. When this is rendered in the subtitles by the lexical equivalent of ‘miles’, we read that the nearest British fighter plane is “320 kilometres”away.

In my view, there are undeniably contexts in which precise lexical equivalents should be used (e.g. in scientific texts). In the excerpt in hand, however, the point is merely that the fighter plane is far away. A less precise rendition, such as “300 kilometres away”, would therefore have been more adequate than the actual subtitle. The subtitle smacks of the dictionary rather than idiomatic usage and the real world. Yet the subtitler is not ‘wrong’. The following subtitle is more to my liking:

“We can’t have anybody drive around with 500 gallons of fuel.”
“Vi kan ikke have hvemsomhelst til at køre rundt med 2.000 liter benzin.”

There are, however, numerous examples of lexical equivalents which are inadequate in context, e.g. when

“you should be as *embarrassed* as I am [about a disappearance of something in a police station]” is rendered by the lexical equivalent of “forlegen” instead of “flove”. Similarly, a superior’s order to a police officer to “Take him home” is neither adequate nor idiomatic in the rendition “Følg ham hjem”. This would imply that the police officer should be walking behind ‘him’ while he is to accompany or drive ‘him’ home in the English source text. This would be rendered adequately by, for example, “Tag med ham hjem”.

Sometimes lexical equivalents are not only inadequate, but downright wrong:

A policeman threatens to report a colleague to the “men in the grey suits”. This is translated word-for-word, and lexically correct, as “mændene i jakkesættene”. This, however, is misleading. An adequate translation might for instance have been “folk fra det interne overvågningskorps” (GB b-tr.: men from ‘Internal Affairs’ who supervise and control police conduct).

Creativity

In other cases, translators must manage without the help of dictionaries, and must use their imaginations to render something adequately, as in the following two statements, by a special agent:

“We leave the letter ‘l’ [which stands for “lies” and “liar”] and *rise* to credibility” [namely the letter “c-”].
The Danish subtitle does not render the last references to the alphabet:
“Når vi opgiver “l” [løgnhals” and “løgne”] (GB b-tr.: when we abandon ‘l’)
og *går over* til *troværdighed*”.
‘Troværdighed’ is the lexical equivalent of “credibility” but it also *moves us down* to “t-” in the alphabet. A more adequate translation might have been
“Lad os holde op med at bruge ‘l’-ord
og stige op til *anstændighed*” (or *belevenhed*, *dyd*, etc. – as long as the initial letter is one of the first in the alphabet).

The nouns would not be lexical equivalents, but thanks to their positive value and the initial letter, they would adequately convey the idea of moral improvement.

The subtitler is exploiting the facility latent in Danish of combining words into long compounds in the rendition of :

“I used to be wax barrels in a brewery.” When this is subtitled:
“Jeg var en klargører på et bryggeri.” This rendition is incomprehensible to Danes since the audience is not informed about what kind of things the girl talking readied and the purpose of her work – in addition to meeting with a word which is so rare (but then still within the accepted rules of word formation) that it is not found in any standard dictionary.

Sometimes the subtitler’s creativity has led him astray as when a British pilot comments to a friend that:

“Jerry didn’t get you.” It is subtitled
“Prøjserne fik ikke ram på dig.”

It can be argued that the two words belong to the ‘same semantic sphere: one is a slang term for Germans during the World Wars and the other refers to people from the German province that united Germany in 1870 and which was well-known for its military power. But the Danish word is inappropriate historically, for although the Prussians were the prime movers in Germany in the First World War they were not in the Second World War.

Adequacy and systems

Translators – or in this case, subtitlers – often have to rely on background knowledge. This is the case when a senior police officer begins to quote from masterpieces of Anglophone literature. The problem is that the quotations are rendered literally and correctly in Danish on a word-for-word basis in the subtitles of:

“We are such stuff as dreams are made on” (Shakespeare: *The Tempest*),
“The sun will rise tomorrow”(slightly distorted, from the Bible (*Ecclesiastes 1:5*) and the title of a novel by Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926))
“ - and our little life/ is rounded with a sleep.” (the continuation of the quotation from *The Tempest*)
“Ah, Shakespeare.”

This informative comment from another policeman, offering the only clue that the phrases are quotations rather than statements to be rendered as literal lexical equivalents, is not included in the Danish subtitles. Accordingly, the Danish audience has no idea of the feast of quotations presented on the screen. In English, the quotations would call forth different responses, depending on whether the viewers belonged to the educated segment or were unfamiliar with the classics of Anglophone literature.

Subsequently there is another quotation:

“No man is an island.” (John Donne. *Meditation XVII* (1623))

A feminist on the staff corrects it: “ - or woman.”

She is tartly told that it is “‘man’ in the sense of ‘sentient being’.”

This is yet another example of how Danish viewers may miss the literary allusions, just like English speakers unversed in literature. But then it might cynically be added that few Danes are familiar with English literature.

It will be appreciated that we have now entered the system of literature, which some critics and teachers feel translators should have at their fingertips. In the good old days when I was a student, some teachers would even tell us that we would have to find the precise translation used in the “authorised” translation of Shakespeare’s works. They were apparently blissfully unaware that no translation was “authorised” and that there were quite a few Danish translations competing for audience attention.

There are other systems than that of literature. The following passage refers to British society. We hear of a judge who showed sympathy towards a young man:

“because his father was a member of the same club as he was.” In the subtitling “han var også en rig mand,” the subtitler has merely focussed on wealth. In most, including this, contexts the fact to note is that the elderly fathers are both members of a typical British club. Most translators will be aware that the system of clubs, and the loyalty that these call forth among their members, is unknown outside Britain and calls for some explanation for non-British target audiences.

I suggest that, avoiding all reference to clubs, the English phrase might have been adequately rendered as:

“de bevægede sig i de samme kredse” or “de omgikkes samme folk.” (GB: “they moved in the same circles” or “they associated with the same kind of people.”)

History is another system, and a failure to adequately render the meaning may produce unfortunate results if the reference is not 100% correct:

In a television serial episode set in the United Kingdom in 1982, a bully threatens to tell “the boys across the water, who never forgive and forget” about the victim’s doings. It is right of the subtitler to think of the Irish Sea in this connection, but the rendition “til irerne” (to the Irish) is wrong and disastrously undiplomatic, since the “boys across the water” are the Irish Republican Army, which was active in Northern Ireland at the time. Few Irish nationals would wish to be identified with them.

When history connects with something specific in one language and nation, it may present insurmountable problems to translators, even when they know what is meant:

It is thus virtually impossible to convey the response of British viewers familiar with the First World War to the fact that, in the Second World War serial, a Nazi sympathiser owns an inn called 'The White Feather'. During the First World War, white feathers were liberally handed out to young British men who hesitated to enlist in the British Army. White feathers, as a symbol of cowardice, are still mentioned in entries of *The Concise Oxford* and my old bilingual dictionary.

Acronyms

A frequent solution applied in translation work is to use a 'functional equivalent', i.e. to explain the function of the phenomenon mentioned.

The acronym MIT is for example subtitled as "Teknisk Universitet". It is hard to suggest an alternative short of the full title, "Massachusetts Institute of Technology", and, possibly, an explanation of its unmatched international prestige.

In many similar cases, however, translators transfer the acronyms from the source text, which is akin to the use of lexical equivalents and 'literal translation'. In such cases, the target audience does not usually understand what is meant.

Acronyms are widely used in military parlance, and in one episode of the Second World War serial, the main theme is that many British women serving King and country got into what was euphemistically termed "trouble". The episode also refers to various branches of the armed forces by acronyms.

A young woman driver seems to poke fun at this when she assures her worried father that "I won't get PWP."

Slightly surprised, her father asks her what she means, and is duly shocked by the answer: "pregnant without permission".

This is rendered adequately, indeed splendidly, in Danish:

"Jeg skal nok lade være at blive GUT" which reflects both the use of an acronym and the individual words in:

"gravid uden tilladelse."

However, apart from this early example in the episode, the subtitler opted for a direct transfer of all acronyms. Consequently, there are numerous references to the RAF (the Royal Air Force), the WAAC (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps), the MTC (Military Transport Corps (?)), IFF (Identification, Friend or Foe: a system of coded signals to distinguish between friendly and hostile aircraft), and so on. These include acronyms which cannot be decoded by anyone except those who participated actively in the Second World War.

In this episode, the acronyms are used inside the military system, and baffle even civilian Englishmen during the war. We can thus argue that the Danish audience is on a par with the audience in the source culture, modern Englishmen: the 'literal' subtitling involving a transfer of the acronyms is adequate and no explanation is needed. In many instances explanations would, of course, exceed the limitations which apply to subtitling in terms of the number of characters that may be used per line: long explanations are not possible in the subtitling system.

Let me mention a surprising subtitle. One man tells another that

"I come from *County Offaly* [in the Republic of Ireland]." It is said quite clearly, so it is mystifying that this should be subtitled as the mysterious:

"Jeg er fra *Co. Offaly*."

True, Co. is the abbreviation used in Irish but it must baffle Danish viewers: unless they know Irish usage, this is incomprehensible.

Specialist language

In one sense, this also applies to words and phrases which are not comprehensible to every-one, such as in this exchange about a woman who feels early birth pangs:

“She has contractions.”

“Hun har plukveer.”

“You have to be a woman to understand this ...”

Since the word is ‘confined’ only to more than half of the species of *homo sapiens* (plus all male doctors, nurses, and assistants in the maternity wards), the word “contractions” hardly qualifies as ‘a specialist term’. Nevertheless, there is a point to the final remark of the excerpt: essentially, each one of us has limitations and strengths in terms of our individual use of words which ultimately depend on the linguistic, social, and national systems to which each of us belongs. However, this topic extends far beyond my present discussion, so I will leave it at that.

Language usage

At one stage, a superior police officer gives the order:

“Officers, arrest this man.” This is rendered adequately as:

“Arrestér den mand.” since it would be against normal Danish usage to use the policemen’s official title.

In fact, many words in English dialogue are not subtitled in Danish because they would jar or sound odd. Conversely, I miss the particles so typical of spoken (and written) Danish in the subtitles. These 25-30 particles convey subtleties in the mood of the speaker, and make for fluency. They are short items and include ‘da’, ‘jo’, ‘skam’, and so on. Thus the lament by the director after there has been as serious. Some lexicologists have suggested lexical equivalents in English, such as ‘at last’, ‘tolerably’, ‘to be sure’, but these are awkward, heavy and far from adequate. (Good dictionaries advise translators not to use them in English at all.) Let us have a look at an English speech that could be rendered idiomatically. The words are those of a director, after there has been an accident at his plant, shudders at the thought:

“What will the board think of this.” It is subtitled:

“Hvad vil bestyrelsen tænke om det.” In my view an adequate subtitle in idiomatic Danish should run:

“Hvad vil bestyrelsen *dog ikke* sige til dette her.”

I have italicised the missing particles that are essential in order to make any text appear authentic to Danish audiences, but are sadly lacking in translations, and thus give them away for what they really are: foreign bodies in the Danish language.

Equivalent effect

It will be noted that I have not referred to “equivalent effect”, to use a concept originally coined by Eugene Nida as “dynamic equivalence” (Nida. 1964. 170-189). Although we can argue that some of the above examples have ‘equivalent effects’ among both English and Danish people, we cannot

extend this assumption to encompass Russian, let alone Chinese audiences. Some phenomena are closely bound to the specific history and nation involved.

No translation can for example adequately convey the response of a British audience to the remark of an elderly father bringing the body of his only son to the police:

“I promised I would bring him back!”

The son was killed while trying to help wounded soldiers on the beach at Dunkirk in northern France, the place from which, under constant attack from Nazi bombers, British forces were evacuated from the European continent in May 1940. This was a traumatic experience for the whole British nation.

Let us finish this discussion with an example that illustrates that adequacy and equivalent effects depend entirely on the senders, the audience in the source culture and the subtitler and his/her audience in the target culture. An American officer is pondering on whether he will return to Great Britain after World War II:

After the War I might return to settle down here and establish a firm doing some plumbing and central heating.

In order to understand this exchange, the subtitler as well as the ultimate recipient(s) have to know that by formerly, the British would only coal fires in the homes and that plumbing was outside the houses which meant that in case of frost there would be problems. Many Britons would refer to this problem by saying that the plumbing was outside because then it could easily be accessed for repair work.

In this case, it is doubtful whether everybody in the British audience would get the point. This also applies to any audience outside the British isles. In order to understand this as a snide or humorous comment, one has to be familiar with the British ways of heating houses as well as their way of having plumbing. Few in a modern audience will understand it. Therefore, the subtitler's solution, viz. to render the exchange literally was the best one: the comment reaches only those in the two audiences who know what is behind it.

Conclusion

In this article, I have set up two poles which turn out not to be mutually exclusive in translation work, namely adequacy and lexical equivalents. I have employed a definition from my own previous work for adequacy, and have suggested a reasonably flexible one for lexical equivalents, as those claimed by an available ‘authority’, usually a bilingual dictionary, to have the “same” meaning in the source and target languages. In principle we may liken *lexical equivalents* to *literal translation*, and with even greater caution, we may dub *adequacy free translation*. There is a certain similarity between the two axes, although they are far from identical.

The discussion of specific lexical equivalents between English and Danish cannot be used for generalisations, let alone be extended to other language pairs. It is the general principles that are important.

Lexical equivalents deriving from bilingual dictionaries are excellent for students who wish to improve their vocabulary in the foreign language. They also frequently serve translators well, most often by providing adequate words or phrases, and sometimes by pointing to near-synonyms and adequate renditions. There are no rules defining when lexical equivalents are useful, and when they should be avoided.

Most translators strive for adequacy in translation. However, a target text may sometimes reveal its links with the source text, which is conceived and expressed in another language. This may simply be because the translators lack the surplus energy to break loose of the constraints of the source text, or because the target language possesses special features similar to the

Danish particles that ‘behave erratically’, and which it is impossible to introduce systematically in translations to make them sound and read as genuine Danish texts.

Adequacy is also hard to pin down. There are many factors which have a bearing on this, including the translator’s competence, background and world knowledge. To this we must add the weight of the social and historical systems which may differ in the source and target-language cultures. Audience response is yet another factor which plays a role.

I have not ‘solved’ any problems in this article. However, I have illustrated how awareness of central concepts in translational activities is of great use to students, teachers, and scholars of translation.

References

Dollerup, Cay. 2006. *Basics of Translation Studies*. Iași: Institutul European.

www.Cay-Dollerup.dk, where many of my articles may be found in full text.

Khairouline, Vladimir. Review of *Basics of Translation Studies*. Language-International.net.

Nida, Eugene. 1964. *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: Brill.