

KHUNG LÝ THUYẾT TOÀN DIỆN VỀ ĐÁNH GIÁ TÍNH CHÍNH XÁC TRONG DỊCH THUẬT

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Tính chính xác là yếu tố cốt lõi trong nghiên cứu và thực hành dịch thuật, nhưng vẫn thiếu một khung lý thuyết toàn diện để phân tích và đánh giá yếu tố này. Nghiên cứu này đề xuất một khung lý thuyết hệ thống hóa các thành phần chính của tính chính xác trong dịch thuật. Thông qua việc phân tích các lý thuyết hiện có, khung lý thuyết được đề xuất gồm ba thành phần chính: (1) sự tương đương về nghĩa; (2) tổ chức cách thức trình bày văn bản; (3) cấu trúc ngữ pháp. Khung lý thuyết không chỉ đóng góp vào việc nâng cao hiệu quả giảng dạy và nghiên cứu dịch thuật mà còn hỗ trợ các tổ chức dịch thuật trong việc đánh giá chất lượng dịch. Những hạn chế của nghiên cứu bao gồm thiếu dữ liệu thực nghiệm để xác nhận độ tin cậy của khung lý thuyết và khả năng áp dụng hạn chế đối với các loại văn bản, cặp ngôn ngữ, cũng như trình độ chuyên môn của người dùng. Các nghiên cứu trong tương lai cần tập trung vào việc kiểm chứng trên quy mô lớn và phát triển thang điểm đánh giá để ứng dụng thực tiễn.

Từ khóa: dịch thuật, tính chính xác trong dịch thuật, khung lý thuyết dịch thuật.

Accuracy is a fundamental element in translation research and practice, but a comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis and assessment of this element is lacking. This study proposes a theoretical framework that systematically delineates the key components of accuracy in translation. Through an examination of existing theories, the proposed framework consists of three fundamental components: (1) equivalent meaning; (2) text organisation; and (3) grammatical structure. The theoretical framework not only aims to enhance the efficacy of translation teaching and research but also provides support for translation organisations in evaluating translation quality. However, the study has limitations, including the lack of empirical data to validate the framework's reliability and its limited applicability to certain text types, language pairs, and user expertise levels. Future research should focus on large-scale validation and the development of evaluation metrics for practical application.

Keywords: Translation, translation accuracy, translation framework.

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A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING TRANSLATION ACCURACY

1. Introduction

In our interconnected world, translation plays a vital role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. As global communication grows, accurate translations have become essential for effective international interaction. Yet ensuring translated texts convey intended messages while maintaining clarity presents significant challenges. Therefore, understanding translation's theoretical and practical foundations is crucial for improving cross-linguistic communication quality. This paper examines translation's complex nature, focusing on organisation, cohesion, and coherence—key elements for maintaining communicative effectiveness in translated texts. These elements go beyond word transfer between languages, representing how meaning is constructed and conveyed across linguistic systems. The paper incorporates insights from translation studies frameworks, offering critical perspectives on how theory informs practice.

This article synthesises scholarly perspectives on translation, emphasising both linguistic and cultural factors. It shows how organisation, cohesion, and coherence help translations move beyond mere structural replication to enable effective communication in the target language. This review serves as a foundation for translation researchers and

professionals seeking to create translations that are both linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Notions of Translation*

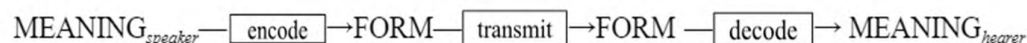
Although translation has been practised for thousands of years, it has only evolved into an academic discipline in recent decades. As it is a new profession, linguists have developed various perspectives on translation theory, with prominent names such as Nida, Catford, Weber, Jakobson, Newmark, etc. contributing significantly to the field.

Jakobson (1959) views translation as substituting entire messages between languages rather than the separation of “code-units” only. Having the same idea on meaning-based translation theory, Newmark (1988a), however, is more concerned about conveying the author's intended meaning. In another view on equivalent-based translation, Catford (1965, p.20) defines it as replacing material in one language with equivalent material in another, while Nida (1984) focuses on achieving the “closest natural equivalent” in meaning and style.

Translation can also be taken into account as the process of encoding and decoding. According to Shannon's Code Model (CM) of communication (1948, as stated in Webber, 2005), meaning is

encoded (by the speaker) into linguistic forms and then transmitted over some channel of communication (speaking, writing, etc.) to the hearer, who then

decodes the meaning by his own language repertoire. The process can be depicted as follows:



Or more simply:



Weber (2005) recognises the similarities between the translation and the communication process. From his view, translation is “a meaning-mediated relation between an SL text and an RL text” (p. 43).

Therefore, based on the Code Model (CM) of communication, Weber proposed the Source-Meaning-Receptor (SMR) theory as follows:



A text, as Weber puts forward, is an encoded meaning. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator must (1) deconstruct, or decode, the text to grasp its meaning in different layers, then put everything back into the context and use the receptor language to express the meaning. This step is called (2) “encoding”.

2.2. The Concepts of Accuracy in Translation

Looking upon translation accuracy as “same meaning,” Larson (1998, p. 48) points out that the critical concern is whether the translation communicates the same meaning as the ST. He emphasises that translation accuracy involves ensuring the translation faithfully conveys the

original author’s intended meaning without additions, deletions, or information changes. In a similar view, Shuttleworth and Cowie (2014) define translation accuracy as “the extent to which the translation matches the original” (p. 3). Though it refers to the preservation of ST information, which is more inclined to be literal than free, translation accuracy is “culturally specific and variable” (Venuti, 1995, as cited in Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014). The two authors also contend that translation can be operated at different translation unit levels: phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts, except in the case of literary translation.

However, these perspectives lack a clear definition of meaning preservation and overlook various factors affecting accuracy,

such as text complexity, translator competence, or cultural context. Although Shuttleworth and Cowie (2014) do acknowledge the importance of cultural and historical context, it is not clear the extent to which they could impact translation accuracy. Regarding translator competence, neither of the two theories deals with translators' role - their specialised knowledge of languages, cultures, and contexts (Angelelli, 2009) - in ensuring translation accuracy.

In terms of text complexity, the researchers contend that translation accuracy goes beyond merely conveying the literal meaning of ST. For instance, a single sentence can be expressed in multiple ways while maintaining the same underlying meaning. In Vietnamese, the idiom "like father, like son" can be rendered as "*hổ phụ sinh hổ tử*," "*cha nào con nấy*", or "*con nhà tông, không giống lông thì cũng giống cánh*." Similarly, a simple sentence like "*Tôi yêu em*" can be translated as "*I love you*," "*I am in love with you*," "*I adore you*," or "*I have feelings for you*." Therefore, the translator must carefully select the most accurate and appropriate expression to ensure equivalence between the two texts. Additionally, the theory does not specify criteria for assessing accuracy.

Moreover, a text, regardless of its genre, has its own tone and style. An effective and accurate translation should not only convey the literal meaning but also preserve the tone and style (Dobyns, 2003, p. 152;

Huang, 2015, chapter 2). Take a humorous English phrase as an example - "*Why don't skeletons fight each other? They don't have the guts*." The word-by-word translation "*Tại sao bộ xương không đánh nhau? Vì chúng không có ruột*" would apparently destroy both the literal meaning and the playful tone. Instead, an accurate translation in terms of style and tone might be: "*Tại sao bộ xương không đánh nhau? Vì chúng không có gan*." Similarly, in a formal or literary context, a sentence like "*The sun sets gently over the horizon, casting a golden hue on the sea*" should be translated as "*Mặt trời lặn êm đềm sau chân trời, nhuộm vàng cả mặt biển*," which preserves both the meaning and the poetic style. Besides, other factors that should be taken into consideration in accuracy assessment will be discussed later in the following sections.

In contrast to the idea of keeping the same meaning as the above-mentioned scholars, Nida (1982) believes in the equivalent effect, holding it as the core element of translation accuracy. Introducing the receptor-based approach, for Nida, translation accuracy comes in pairs with equivalence in translation. He identifies two types of equivalence: (1) formal equivalence and (2) dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence, later called "formal correspondence," focuses on the form and content of ST, using ST structure to determine accuracy and correctness.

On the other hand, dynamic, or "functional," equivalence is more receptor-

oriented as it focuses on the text's meaning and effect. It is based on "the principle of equivalent effects", where "the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially like that of the original receptors" (Nida & Taber, 1982, p. 200). These scholars consider it to be a more important factor in translation. Indeed, Nida asserts that the ultimate goal of dynamic equivalence is to produce "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (Nida, 1964, p. 166). A translation is seen as accurate when it evokes the same effect on its readers as the ST does. Consequently, the meaning and effect is prioritised in dynamic equivalence, allowing for changes in form (formal correspondence) if necessary.

Nida's receptor-based approach to translation and his concepts of equivalence and equivalent effect have sparked significant debate and criticism among scholars (e.g. Lefevere, 1992; Larose, 1989; Gentzler, 2001). In particular, equivalence is more concerned with word level as the unit of translation (UT). Moreover, the concept of dynamic equivalence was developed for the sake of "faithfully" conveying the Bible's message and thus may not be useful for other types of documents, especially literary translation, which involves not just the message but also how that message is expressed (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 7-8). In addition, Nida's (1982) concept of dynamic equivalence may be not sufficient if we consider its possibility (Larose, 1989,

p. 78). The question is how to measure the 'effect' of a text on its reader since it is impossible for a text to "have the same effect and elicit the same response in two different cultures and times" (Munday et al., 2022, p. 58). Also, since may perceive the text differently and there are no clear criteria for effect measurement, such evaluations remain largely subjective.

Lastly, critics argue that Nida's theory derives from his religious beliefs rather than scientific principles. Dynamic equivalence prioritises communicative effectiveness, similar to the Protestant belief in communication power (Gentler, 2001). Nida (1964), then, is said to regard translation as "the rearticulation of the power of the word (over people)" (Gentler, 2001, chapter 3) and therefore his work on dynamic equivalence is "theological and proselytizing", aiming to promote the ideas of Protestant Christianity regardless of the readers' cultural backgrounds (Munday et al., 2022, pp. 58-59).

Challenges in Ensuring Accuracy in Translation

The previously discussed concepts of translation accuracy have provided valuable insights from various perspectives. However, none offer a complete or precise set of criteria for assessing accuracy. While comparing a translation to its source is essential, the challenge lies in determining the appropriate criteria for evaluation. The literature highlights the difficulties translators face, particularly in maintaining

cohesion and coherence in ambiguous texts. Language learners often struggle with such complexities, revealing gaps in translator training regarding linguistic and cultural differences. Managing multiple layers of meaning, especially in idiomatic or metaphorical language, poses significant challenges in preserving both literal and figurative elements of the ST.

Ambiguity is especially problematic in legal and technical translations, where minor misinterpretations can have serious consequences. Additionally, with technological advancements, AI has become integral to translation. However, there is limited research on how AI-assisted translation mitigates or exacerbates these challenges. While AI enhances efficiency, it often fails to capture linguistic nuances, raising ethical and practical concerns about its role in professional translation.

This study addresses the gap in translation studies regarding the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for assessing translation accuracy. By identifying and analysing key elements of accuracy, it aims to develop a structured framework applicable to both professional translation evaluation and academic training. Accordingly, the research question is:

“What are the fundamental components of translation accuracy, and how can they contribute to the overall theoretical framework?”

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing translation accuracy. By synthesising and analysing theoretical perspectives, the research aims to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework for translation evaluation. The study follows a systematic process: (1) collecting materials and synthesising theories to establish a theoretical foundation, (2) analysing and comparing existing criteria to identify key components of accuracy, and (3) developing a theoretical framework by systematising the components and determining the relationships among them. The final outcome is a structured framework, illustrated with hypothetical examples, to demonstrate its practical application in evaluating translation accuracy.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are essential for understanding diverse translation strategies. Jakobson (1959) views equivalence of form or function as key to transferring meaning, though critics argue this assumes all meaning is translatable. Newmark (1988b) balances ST fidelity with TL audience expectations, stressing both accuracy and resonance. Catford (1965) introduces the concept of formal and dynamic equivalence, focusing on structural and semantic correspondence, while Nida (1984) prioritizes reader's

response in TL. Despite their insights, these theories do not fully address modern translation practices, particularly in multilingual and multimodal environments where text, image, and culture intersect. Larson (1998) defines translation accuracy as the preservation of meaning and information. While we concur that meaning equivalence is the core of translation, accuracy extends beyond meaning alone.

This paper applies Baker's (1992) framework to examine translation accuracy. Baker (1992) defines equivalent meaning at both word and above-word levels. Word-level equivalence concerns single words, while above-word equivalence involves phrases, clauses, sentences, and texts (Hatim & Munday, 2004). At the phrase level, Baker (1992, p. 47) highlights (1) collocations and (2) idioms and fixed expressions as major challenges for translators. Thus, equivalent meaning, covering all UT levels, is the first criterion for translation accuracy.

Baker (1992) also discusses textual equivalence, which involves the organisation of a text. Key factors include (1) sentence and information structure, (2) cohesion, (3) pragmatic equivalence (coherence and connotation), (4) genre, and (5) text style. Marie and Perry (1998) add punctuation as another essential component.

When addressing pragmatics, many linguists emphasise that the style and tone

of a text are crucial factors (e.g., House, 2015; Robinson, 2003). Despite criticism, Nida's concept of 'equivalent effect' significantly influences modern translation. Therefore, the accurate transmission of ST pragmatic elements to TT plays a vital role in recreating the same effect of ST.

Through synthesis and analysis, this study identifies six essential elements of text organisation: (1) sentence and information structure, (2) cohesion, (3) punctuation, (4) text style, (5) genre, and (6) pragmatic equivalence (coherence, implication, style, and tone). Therefore, alongside meaning, accurate translation of these elements is crucial for ensuring translation accuracy.

Another aspect of equivalence that Baker (1992) takes notice of is the equivalence of grammar. Dealing with the differences in grammatical systems between SL and TL is one of the challenging parts of translation. Each language follows its own conventions for reporting events (Baker, 1992, p. 82), leading to the potential addition or omission of information in TT (Baker, 1992, p. 86). Any attempt to replicate the grammatical structure of ST into TT can result in misunderstandings or grammatical errors if that particular structure is absent in TL. Therefore, the grammatical accuracy that the researchers aim to emphasise is not an exact translation of SL grammar, but rather the accurate use of TL grammatical conventions. Additionally, SL

structures often have multiple TL equivalents, requiring careful selection based on linguistic norms and context. Therefore, grammatical accuracy is assessed through two key aspects: (1)

grammatical correctness and (2) grammatical appropriateness.

Based on these insights, the researchers propose a framework for evaluating translation accuracy as follows:

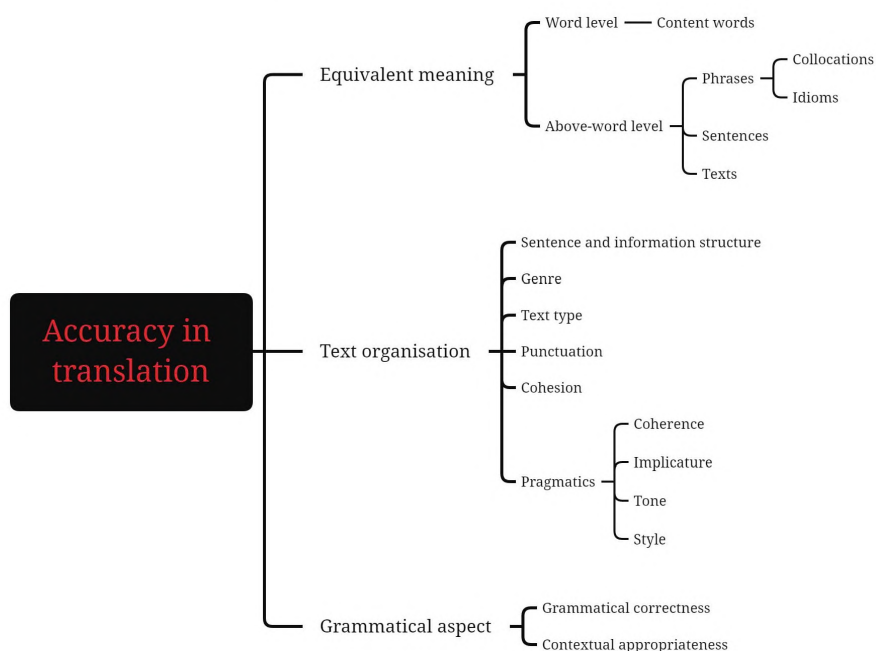


Figure 1. Framework for Accuracy in Translation

Equivalent Meaning

As stated above, the preservation of meaning is a dominant concern in the context of accurate translation. Fidelity, a central concept in translation ethics, emphasises that a translation should accurately represent the original text, maintaining its integrity and intended meaning (Chesterman, 2020, p. 15). This approach to ethics views translation as a responsibility to accurately reflect the source material, reinforcing the translator's role in ensuring authenticity and respect for the original work's essence. In this respect,

a translation must be faithful to its ST, and “it is unethical for the translator to distort the meaning of the source text” (Robinson, 2003, p. 25). The authors and works mentioned in previous sections also emphasise the importance of equivalence of meaning between the ST and TT, indeed. Therefore, the term ‘translation accuracy’ refers to how effectively a translation reproduces the original content in TL, ensuring that the conveyed meaning remains intact.

Equivalent Meaning at Word Level

According to Baker (1992, p. 10), in order to render the overall meaning of a text, translators need to “start by decoding the units and structures which carry that meaning”. Translators are expected to “possess individual meaning” (Baker, 1992, p. 11) of the smallest unit, the word. To a certain extent, if the ST is not featured as any kind of document needed to preserve its morphological features (i.e. poetry), the word can be considered the smallest unit of translation (UT). Here comes the concept of content words and function words when we discuss word meaning.

According to Corver and Riemsdijk (2001), content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and certain prepositions) are lexical items that “carry the principal meaning of the sentence” (p. 1). Thus, finding the equivalent of content words is the number one task for translators to ensure the same meaning. Conversely, function words are more related to surface structure, to fulfilling the grammatical function rather than carrying specific meanings. They reflect the cognitive processes of native speakers - their conception of the world such as tense, modality, definiteness, number, degree, interrogativity, etc. (Corver & Riemsdijk, 2001).

English is a synthetic language, where changes in word form usually indicate changes in meanings or grammatical functions. In contrast, Vietnamese is an analytic language that relies less on word form changes. For instance, English verbs

conjugate for pronouns, tense, number, and gender, while Vietnamese verb form is invariable. Tenses are normally indicated by context or time expressions. Take this Vietnamese sentence (1) and its English translation (2) as examples:

(1) *Tháng trước, chúng tôi đến thăm các khu công nghiệp lớn ở Đồng bằng Sông Hồng.*

Content words: tháng trước, chúng tôi, đến thăm, khu công nghiệp lớn, Đồng bằng Sông Hồng.

Function words: các, ở.

(2) *Last month, we visited large industrial parks in the Red River Delta.*

Content words: last month, we, visit, large industrial park, Red River Delta.

Function words: morpheme “-ed” indicating past time, morpheme “-s” indicating plural noun, in, the.

English uses inflectional morphemes like “-ed” for past tense and “-es” for plurality, while Vietnamese relies on lexical markers preceding nouns (e.g., *các* for plurality) and time expressions (e.g., *tuần trước* for past time). These structural differences make direct translation impossible. The translators must interpret function words’ meanings and adapt them to the TL grammar.

The researchers consider function words as beyond meaning equivalence, but the equivalence of pragmatics instead. Since function words’ meaning is not often

explicitly expressed, assessing how well they correspond to SL is challenging. Therefore, in this framework, function words are excluded from word-level equivalence. When referring to meaning equivalence at the word level, the researchers mean the equivalent of the meaning of content words.

Equivalent Meaning above Word Level

As mentioned earlier, words can be considered the smallest unit of translation (UT), then, readers may wonder “What does ‘unit of translation’ mean?” and “Are there larger UTs than words?”, since this term has not been discussed in this study. The following part is going to answer the questions.

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) define UT as “the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually” (p. 21). While words are generally believed to carry out meaning, meaning is more often expressed through larger units and various linguistic structures (Baker, 1992, p.11). Thus, meaning exists not only at the word level but also at higher levels.

Consider the following CNN headline:

China’s newest nuclear-powered submarine sank earlier this year, US officials say.

This short text can be subdivided as follows:

[China’s / newest / nuclear-powered / submarine] sank / [earlier/this year] [US officials / say]

Note that the slashes (/) indicate small word groups with distinct semantic meanings that should be considered independently, while the brackets ([...]) consist of larger units that are likely to be translated as a whole.

Here is a possible Vietnamese-translated version:

Giới chức Hoa Kỳ cho biết tàu ngầm chạy bằng năng lượng hạt nhân mới nhất của Trung Quốc đã bị chìm vào đầu năm nay.

[US officials said the submarine run by nuclear power newest of China sank at the beginning this year].

The different ST-TT lines up as follows:

[China’s	/ newest	/ nuclear-powered	/ submarine] /
[của Trung Quốc	/ mới nhất	/ chạy bằng năng lượng hạt nhân	/ tàu ngầm] /
sank	/ [earlier	/ this year]	/ [US officials / say]
đã bị chìm	/ [vào đầu	/ năm nay]	/ [Giới chức Hoa Kỳ / cho biết]

Both English and Vietnamese take *China’s newest nuclear-powered submarine* as a single unit, but their word

orders differ. In English, adjectives precede head nouns, whereas Vietnamese adjectives follow head nouns to modify

them. Additionally, the Vietnamese translation includes elements like *chạy* ('run'), *đã bị* (indicating past tense and passive voice), and *vào* ('at') to enhance readability.

In summary, this example demonstrates the complexities of translation, where UTs are typically larger than individual words and small language chunks combine to form sentences. UT, hence, the linguistic unit used by the translator in the process of translation can range from a single word to a phrase, clause, sentence, or even the entire text (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

Equivalent Meaning at the Phrase Level

Words do not combine randomly but follow specific patterns to convey meaning

(Baker, 1992). This structured combination is known as “phrase”. In discussing phrase-level equivalence, Baker examines two lexical patternings: (1) collocations and idioms and (2) fixed expressions as she believed that any “fixed, recurring pattern of the language” (p. 64) should be treated as a single unit to establish meaning.

The meaning of collocations, fixed expressions, and idioms exceeds the sum of their individual words. Therefore, translators must recognise these phrases, interpret them as whole UTs, and translate them as phrase-for-phrase units rather than word-for-word. Failing to do so can result in unnatural, awkward, or even inaccurate translations. Consider the following examples:

ST		Possible TT	Word-for-word translation due to the failure to recognise special phrases
Collocation	heavy rain	⇒ <i>mưa to/mưa lớn</i> (literally “big rain”)	<i>mưa nặng</i>
		⇒ <i>mưa như trút nước</i> (literally “rain like pouring water”).	
Idiom	to be under the weather	⇒ <i>không khỏe</i> (literally “not healthy”)	<i>ở dưới thời tiết</i>
		⇒ <i>mệt</i> (literally “tired” or “fatigued”)	
Fixed expression	in a nutshell	⇒ <i>tóm lại</i> (literally “summary”)	<i>ở trong vỏ hạt</i>

When the SL and TL have different cultural contexts, some collocations, idioms, and fixed expressions may be untranslatable or difficult to translate (Baker, 1992). It is not the specific words but the meaning they convey and their cultural associations that create translation

challenges. Without appropriate strategies, translations may carry unintended or unfamiliar meanings for target readers.

For instance, the English idiom “to sing a different tune” (to act in a way that contradicts a previously expressed opinion) has no direct Vietnamese

equivalent. A literal translation (“*hát một bài hát khác*”) would be misleading, as Vietnamese does not associate a change in attitude with singing. Instead, translators should consider the context and convey the intended meaning rather than searching for an exact idiom.

Even when an idiom has an equivalent in the TL, its usage may differ. For example, the Vietnamese idiom “*như hình với bóng*” (an inseparable closeness) can be translated as “*as thick as thieves*”. While both indicate strong bonds, the English idiom typically refers to close friendships involving shared secrets, whereas the Vietnamese phrase applies more broadly, including relationships like spouses.

Equivalent Meaning at the Sentence or Clause and Textual Level

A higher level of UTs beyond phrases includes clauses and sentences. A clause carries meaning as it has the character of a message: it is integrated into some form of organisation (i.e., a sentence) and contributes to the flow of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). A sentence, however, may consist of just a single clause without phrases or collocations (Newmark, 1988a). When translating sentences, transposition, clause rearrangement, or recasting may occur, but these changes must be reasonable and respect the functional sentence perspective, which will be discussed in the *Text Organisation* section. Here, meaning

equivalence refers to conveying the full meaning of the clause or sentence.

Sentence length can play a significant stylistic or functional role, particularly in legal or literary texts. Translators should avoid unnecessary division unless it is excessively long. Some authors use sentence length deliberately to create stylistic effects or convey a specific worldview. Thus, translators must carefully preserve the ST’s sentence features (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

To a higher level, textual one (i.e. paragraph and text), translations must maintain the original intended function. Certain texts, such as advertisements or poetry, require translation at a textual or cultural level rather than word-for-word to ensure their message resonates with the target culture. For instance, a simple slogan may need cultural adaptation rather than a direct word-for-word translation:

“Biti’s – Nâng niu bàn chân Việt”

A literal translation, “*Cherishing Vietnamese’ foot*”, would be neither natural nor accurate. First, considering the goal of the translation—introducing the product to a foreign market—retaining “Vietnamese” may not be appropriate. Additionally, the word “*cherish*” carries nuances that do not fit this context, whereas “*embrace*” better captures the meaning of “*nâng niu*”. Lastly, “*bàn chân*” in the original slogan conveys the idea of steps, while “*foot*” in English refers strictly to a body part, lacking the intended imagery of

movement. A more suitable translation would therefore be: “*Embrace every step*”.

ST

*The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle –
Why not I with thine?*

TT

*Suối xuôi nguồn về sông
Sông xuôi dòng về biển
Gió trên cao hòa quyện
Khúc nhạc lòng băng khuâng
Vạn vật không đơn côi
Một tâm hồn, hòa nhịp
Qui luật của muôn đời
Sao hai ta cách biệt?*

(Luu, 2012, p. 152)

In this case, neither individual words, phrases, nor sentences can serve as the UT, as none alone can fully convey the underlying meaning and purpose of the ST. Instead, the entire text functions as the UT, allowing the translator to grasp its overall purpose and reproduce it in the TL. As Newmark (1988) argues, the text is only used as a UT when lower-level units are insufficient.

4.2. Text Organisation

A translation may be rendered for various purposes, but in most cases, the ultimate aim of translators is “to achieve a measure of equivalence at text level, rather than at word or phrase level” so that the target readers accept the given translation as a text, not just aware it as a translation only (Baker, 1992, p. 112). The translators necessarily adjust certain characteristics of text organisation of the SL text. When it

Look at another example:

comes to “text”, she contends any text, in any language, displays particular features for readers to identify it as a text. Organisation criteria should be applied in a translated version of a written text as it helps target readers easily get the message and limits the ambiguity caused by the ST. Adapting from Baker’s features of text organisation, the researchers hold several main features: sentence and information structure, cohesion, genre, text type, punctuation, and pragmatics including coherence, implicature, tone, and style.

*Sentence and information structure:
Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP)*

Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) examines sentence structure based on linguistic, situational, and cultural contexts to determine how each element functions within the text (Newmark, 1988). It differentiates between “rheme” (new or

unknown information) and “theme” (old or known information), regardless of their orders in sentences (Hatim & Munday, 2004, pp. 22-23). The progression of communication in FSP is driven by *communication dynamism* (CD), where elements with higher CD contribute more significantly to communication. The *rheme* typically has a high CD degree as it introduces new information, whereas the *theme* has a lower CD degree because it provides context for the message (Baker, 1992).

Regarding the arrangement of information within clauses and text, Baker (1992) aligns FSP with Halliday’s *thematic and information structures* (p. 112). According to Halliday, a clause consists of two main components: the *theme*, which represents known information and serves as the point of departure, and the *rheme*, which introduces new information about the theme (Baker, 1992, pp. 121–122). For instance, in the clause “*Ptolemy’s model provided a reasonably accurate system for predicting the positions of heavenly bodies in the sky*” (Baker, 1992, p. 121), “*Ptolemy’s model*” serves as the theme, while the remainder of the clause constitutes the rheme. This structure facilitates cohesion by linking previous information to new content, ensuring smooth transitions between sentences.

A similar concept, proposed by Halliday, *information structure*, also divides a message into two parts: given information, which the speaker assumes the listener

already knows, and new information, which the speaker wishes to communicate (Baker, 1992, p. 144). The distinction between thematic and information structures lies in their orientation: thematic structure is writer- or speaker-oriented, while the latter is reader- or listener-oriented.

The two models by Halliday, primarily based on English, assume a fixed word order in which the *theme* always precedes the *rheme*. However, this rigid structure may not be suitable for languages with more flexible word order (Munday et al., 2022, p. 136). As a result, Halliday’s models may not be universally applicable. In contrast, FSP offers a more adaptable framework for analysing sentence structure across languages, as it accommodates variable word orders while maintaining coherence in message progression throughout a text. Therefore, the researchers use FSP to examine the functions of each part within sentences, but it also guarantees to display the connection of messages amongst sentences in a text.

Cohesion

Baker (1992) defines cohesion as “the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which link various parts of a text” (pp. 284-285). Cohesion is crucial in translation as it forms the connection among words and expressions surroundings within a text, ensuring that the TT reflects the ST’s intended experience (Saad Alshehri & Alaboud,

2022). Foreign language learners frequently struggle with understanding and decoding ambiguous texts or texts lacking accuracy of cohesion and coherence, making the two essential translation criteria (Xhepa, 2016). A lack of cohesion can obscure meaning and lead to misinterpretation. Thus, cohesion is a key aspect of translation accuracy.

There are five main cohesive devices in English listed by Halliday and Hasan (1976): reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

Punctuation

Péry-Woodley (n.d., p.79) supposes that text organisation in a text involves explicit signalling by visual formatting and lexical markers for text's clarity. As part of surface formatting, punctuation also plays a crucial role in text organisation and should be considered alongside these features.

Punctuation is essential for text comprehension. Inappropriate usage of them can cause misinterpretation and inaccurate translations. While punctuation is important in translation, translators are not required to preserve all ST marks. Instead, they should adhere to the TL norms and context—whether adding or omitting punctuation marks—to ensure clarity and coherence. In accuracy assessment, punctuation adjustments reflect the translator's proficiency in both the SL and TL.

For example:

Ông lão đi chậm rãi trên đường phố. Áo khoác của ông rách nát và giày dép đã cũ. Ông mang theo một chiếc vali nhỏ cũ kỹ trong tay. Khi đi, ông nhìn quanh những khung cảnh xa lạ. Ông chưa bao giờ đến thành phố này trước đây và cảm thấy hơi lạc. Bỗng nhiên, ông nghe thấy một tiếng động phía sau mình. Ông quay lại nhanh chóng, nhưng không có gì ở đó. Ông nhún vai và tiếp tục đi trên đường của mình.

The translation in English:

The old man walked slowly down the street. His coat was tattered, and his shoes were worn. He carried a small, worn suitcase in his hand. As he walked, he looked around at the unfamiliar surroundings. He had never been to this city before and felt a bit lost. Suddenly, he heard a noise behind him. He turned quickly, but there was nothing there. He shrugged and continued on his way.

In the translation, the two commas are added to the TL text, making the sentences clearer and easier to understand.

Text type

It is necessary to consider what kind of text type is in the ST before conducting the translation process as classifying text types is useful in identifying translation problems, which may entail certain sorts of text types, and ultimately justifying specific approaches and strategies to surpass these difficulties (Baker, 1992, p. 114).

Katharina Reiss claims that there are three basic sorts of text types, including an informative text type, an expressive text type, and an operative one.

Text Type	Informative	Expressive	Operative
Brief definition	Aims to convey facts, knowledge, or opinions in a clear and straightforward manner. The focus is on the information itself, and the language used is logical and objective.	A creative piece where the author's emotions and style are prominent. The focus is on the author's perspective and the artistic elements of the language.	Designed to persuade or influence the reader to take a particular action. The language is persuasive and focused on appealing to the reader's emotions or logic.
Typical text	- Report - Reference work - ...	- Poem - Novel - ...	- Advertisement - Electoral speech

Reiss (1971/2000, as cited in Munday et al., 2022, pp. 100-101)

Genre

The three text types analysed above are considered as three dimensions of a triangle, which unavoidably blend into each other to create new ones displaying features or typically associated with the

three, called “text varieties”, now more commonly known as “genres” (Munday et. al, 2022, p. 101). Munday et. al (2022) already analysed and synthesised insights relating to genre and drew out a conclusion of common genres of texts as follows:

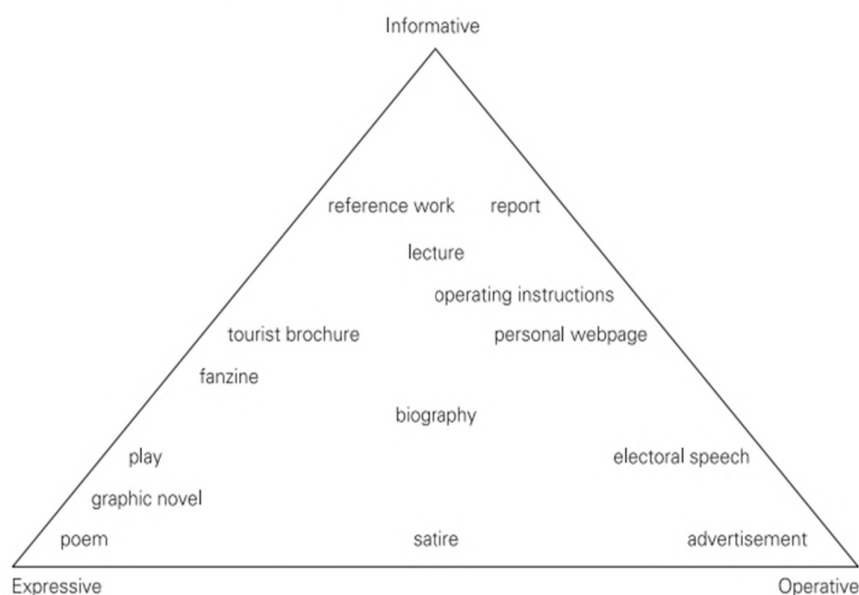


Figure 2 - Text types (taken from Munday, 2001, p. 74)

Identifying the correct genre of an ST helps translators detect particular and typical issues relating to that genre to determine appropriate approaches for a qualified translation.

Pragmatic Equivalence

Pragmatic equivalence is crucial for assessing translation quality, extending beyond mere semantic accuracy. Pragmatics, defined as “the study of language in use,” focuses on meaning shaped by communication rather than just linguistic structure (Baker, 1992, p. 217). It also considers the illocutionary force—the intended effect of an utterance—where pragmatic meaning takes precedence over linguistic form (House, 2015, p. 22).

Translators must distinguish between what is “saying” and what is “implying”, “literal” and “nonliteral” expressions, as well as “content” and underlying “force” in translation (Green, 1989, p. 106). Pragmatic equivalence ensures that a translation conveys both surface meaning and intended effect, accurately reflecting the writer’s intent. Baker (1992) highlights coherence and implicature as key elements in uncovering deeper meanings, while style and tone further contribute to pragmatic equivalence.

Coherence

Baker (1992) defines coherence as “the network of conceptual relations which underlie the surface text” (p. 218). These relations are not immediately visible but

are expressed through cohesion, which serves as “a device for making conceptual relations explicit.” Thus, coherence and cohesion are interdependent. In translation, coherence ensures clarity and organization, while cohesion facilitates smooth textual flow. However, cohesive markers may not fully reveal underlying meanings, as comprehension also depends on the reader’s background knowledge and worldview (p. 219).

Although coherence emerges from the interaction between textual knowledge and the reader’s insights, translators cannot assume that target readers share the necessary background to understand implicit messages (Baker, 1992). While Larson (1998) argues that translation accuracy requires no additions, deletions, or changes, some adjustments may be necessary. Since meaning can extend beyond the written words (implicature), translators may need to clarify certain elements, even if it means adding information absent in the original. This ensures that readers can fully grasp the intended message.

Because understanding a text involves reconstructing the author’s coherence, translators must effectively transfer this coherence across languages and cultures, making it a crucial aspect of translation accuracy. This point is further illustrated through an excerpt from *A Hero from Zero* (Tiny, 1988, as cited in Baker, 1992, p. 220).

The purchasing power of the proposed fifteen hundred shop outlets would have meant excellent price reductions to customers across Britain and the United States. The flagship, Harrods, had never been integrated with the rest and would demerge to retain its particular character and choice.

It's often written, as a handy journalist's tag, that I suffered from an obsession to control the splendid Knightsbridge store. It would be a very static and limited aim, I think. For Lonrho's purpose, it could have been any well-spread stores group. It was chance, and also roulette, that brought Hugh Fraser, the seller, and Lonrho, the buyer, together in 1977.

There are no explicit cohesive relations shown in the text, showing us that both “*Harrods*” and “*the splendid Knightsbridge store*” point to the same thing, except that only those who are British readers familiar with the famous “*Harrods*” store and its other name “*Knightsbridge*”. TT readers unfamiliar with London may not know this. Therefore, when translating it into other languages, translators should provide an explicit link, specifically, through repetition of “*store*” in this above example as the way an Arabic translator dealt with the translation of his when rendering this text into Arabic (Baker, 1992).

Implicature

Implicature refers to what a speaker means or implies rather than what is literally stated. Moreover, Charolles (1983, p. 222) highlighted that readers may perceive “continuity of sense between parts of an utterance” yet still fail to fully comprehend it to show the complexity of meaning transmission. As such translators

must not only identify references but also interpret their significance within specific contexts (Hatim & Munday, 2004). Accurately conveying the writer's implicatures is the solid foundation to preserve the intended meaning as well as the coherence of a good translation.

Proficiently decoding, recoding implicatures, and considering both literal and pragmatic dimensions of the ST have enormous impacts on the overall translated text. For instance, in “*Hôm nay nó lại nghỉ học.*”, the presupposition of this utterance is “*yesterday (and possibly the previous days) he/she was absent from the class*” through the words “*lại*” and the explicit meaning of this utterance is “*today he/she is absent from the class*”. Therefore, it can be inferred that the implication of the above utterance can be “*He/she should go to school.*” or “*He/she is ill.*” ... depending on the context of the utterance.

Similarly, an English utterance “*If you dine and dash, the restaurant can call the police on you.*” The explicit meaning of

this utterance is “*if a person commits the act of dining and dashing, the restaurant has the legal right to contact the police.*” This may imply that the speaker is warning the listener against committing this act or the restaurant will not tolerate dining and dashing.

Style

House (2015) emphasizes that “a translation should reflect the style of the original” (p. 9), highlighting the significance of style and the attitude it conveys. House’s revised model incorporates Hallidayan register concepts, particularly Tenor, which considers the text producer’s background, perspective, and the social attitudes embedded in different styles (formal, consultative, informal). Selecting an appropriate style—whether colloquial or technical—affects both comprehension and the text’s impact on its audience. House (2015) also notes that literary translation is constrained by the ST author’s artistic style, requiring translators to grasp the intended meaning and choose suitable TL strategies to maintain the desired effect. This “motivated choice” (Venuti, 2013; Leech & Short, 2007; Boase-Beier, 2006) is crucial in both original composition and

translation, as it helps shape the text’s structure and meaning. Thus, accurately rendering style in translation extends beyond linguistic equivalence—it preserves the literary, aesthetic, and narrative effects that are essential to the ST’s overall impact.

For example, in scientific or specialised texts, the translation of technical terminology presents a significant challenge. Consider a medical text about cardiovascular disease:

Technical: “*The patient presented with acute myocardial infarction.*”

Layman’s: “*The patient had a heart attack.*”

The technical version uses precise medical terminology “myocardial infarction” but it may be difficult to understand for non-specialists, while the layman’s version uses everyday language to be understood widely, but it lacks medical specificity. In translation, the choice between these styles is based on several factors such as accuracy versus accessibility, target audience, consistency, etc. Below is a brief comparison based on the example:

Accuracy vs. Accessibility	The technical term “myocardial infarction” is more precise, but may be incomprehensible to non-specialists. The layman's term is widely understood but lacks medical specificity.
Target Audience	A translation for medical professionals would retain the technical term, while patient literature might use the simpler version.
Cultural Considerations	Some cultures may have a preference for more or less technical language in medical contexts.
Consistency	In longer texts, maintaining consistent use of either technical or lay terms is crucial for coherence.

Tone

Tone is crucial in translation as it conveys both the meaning and attitude of the author. It plays a key role in interpersonal awareness, where capturing and reproducing a distinct “voice” or “tone” in the TT is emphasized. This highlights the translator’s responsibility not only to accurately translate content but also to reflect the style and emotional nuances of the original text. This aligns with the concept of “register” (Robinson, 2003), showcasing the multifaceted nature of tone in translation. Moreover, linguistic scholars emphasize that mastering tone is essential for a skilled translator.

Tone shapes the power of language, influencing how the message is perceived and the overall impact of the translation. Therefore, an accurate translation must carefully recognize and convey the original text’s subtle tonal nuances—whether formal, intimate, humorous, or serious—to maintain pragmatic equivalence between the ST and TT. By doing so, the translation upholds both accuracy and effectiveness.

Consider an example of a formal notice from a school headmaster:

Original English Notice (Formal tone):

Dear Parents,

I would like to inform you that due to unforeseen circumstances, the school will be closed on Monday, October 10th. We kindly request that you make appropriate arrangements for your children on this day. Regular classes will resume on Tuesday, October 11th.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and thank you for your understanding.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. James Smith

Headmaster

Suggested Vietnamese Translation:

Kính gửi Quý phụ huynh,

Tôi xin thông báo với Quý vị rằng do những tình huống không lường trước được, nhà trường sẽ đóng cửa vào Thứ Hai, ngày 10 tháng 10. Chúng tôi kính đề nghị Quý vị sắp xếp thời gian chăm sóc con em mình trong ngày này. Các lớp học sẽ hoạt động trở lại bình thường vào Thứ Ba, ngày 11 tháng 10.

Chúng tôi chân thành xin lỗi vì bất kỳ sự bất tiện nào có thể xảy ra và cảm ơn sự thông cảm của Quý vị.

Trân trọng,

Tiến sĩ James Smith

Hiệu trưởng

In this translation, we can preserve the formal tone of the original text by using the formal address “*Quý phụ huynh*”, a respectful request from “*We kindly request*” to “*Chúng tôi kính đề nghị*” and other polite phrases to enhance credibility, respect for parents, as well as the seriousness of the matter of the original text.

4.3. Grammatical Structure

Grammatical elements play a crucial role in conveying meaning, as variations in structure can significantly impact a sentence or utterance. According to Brinton (2000), grammar includes syntax (word order) and morphology (word formation), providing an explicit framework for language production and learning. Jakobson (as cited in Baker, 1992) also emphasizes that grammatical patterns shape the aspects of experience expressed in a language. Similarly, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

highlights the importance of grammar in language acquisition (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979).

A grammatically accurate translation must follow the TL's grammatical rules while considering the context. Evaluating grammatical accuracy requires meticulous attention and a comprehensive understanding of both SL and TL systems. Since languages differ in structures, rules, and conventions, English assessments often focus on subject-verb agreement, word order, tense consistency, and article usage. In contrast, Vietnamese translation evaluations typically consider analytical features, classifiers, aspect-tense distinctions, and unique grammatical structures. These differences will be illustrated via the following examples:

Key examples of English features

Subject-Verb Agreement:

“He *is* a student.” (Singular subject, singular verb)

“The students, who were studying hard for the exam, *were* surprised by the unexpected quiz.” (Plural subject, plural verb)

The verb must agree in number (singular or plural) with its subject. This applies even in complex sentences with intervening clauses.

Word Order:

“I *eat* apples.” (Subject-Verb-Object)

“The old man, who lives in the small house on the hill, *gave* me *a* beautiful flower.” (Subject-Verb-Object order within the main clause, with the relative clause interrupting the sequence)

English typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object word order, even in complex sentences.

Tense Consistency:

“He *went* to the store and *bought* some milk.” (Past tense throughout)

“Before he *went* to the store, he *had* already *eaten* breakfast.” (Past perfect tense to indicate an action completed before another past action)

English maintains consistent tense throughout a sentence or paragraph, unless there is a clear reason for a shift (e.g., to indicate a different time frame).

Article Usage:

“I saw *a* cat.” (Indefinite article)

“The *old* woman, who lives next door, *has a* beautiful garden.” (Both definite and indefinite articles are used)

English uses articles (a/an, the) to indicate definiteness or indefiniteness of nouns. Definite articles refer to specific nouns, while indefinite articles refer to nonspecific nouns.

Key examples of Vietnamese features

Analytic Features:

Vietnamese is an analytic language because it primarily relies on word order and function words (like particles) to express grammatical relationships and meanings, rather than relying heavily on inflectional morphology (changes in word form to indicate grammatical information).

Classifiers:

“Cô ấy mua hai *cái* bánh mì và ba *chai* nước.”

This sentence uses classifiers to categorize the nouns “bánh mì” (bread) and “nước” (water). The classifier “cái” is used for countable objects, while “chai” is used for containers. This shows how classifiers are essential for indicating the quantity and properties of nouns in Vietnamese.

Aspect and Tense:

“Trước khi tôi đi ra ngoài, tôi *đã* ăn bữa sáng.”

This sentence demonstrates the use of aspect and tense to describe the sequence of events. The aspect marker “đã” indicates that the action of eating breakfast was

completed before the action of going out. Hence, the complexity of the Vietnamese tense system is illustrated, which distinguishes between aspect and tense to convey meaning.

Unique Grammatical Structures:

Vietnamese has a tremendous amount of distinct grammatical structures, listing all of them would be difficult. Thus, here are some notable ones:

Topic-comment structure: “Con mèo này, nó rất đáng yêu.” (This *cat*, it is very cute.)

Reduplication: “Đẹp đẹp.” (Very *beautiful*)

Classifiers for abstract nouns: “Một ý tưởng hay.” (A good *idea*)

To ensure that a translation is acceptable, effective, and grammatically correct, it is important to consider the TL’s context. If a sentence is grammatically valid but not appropriate for the context, it might sound awkward or unnatural in the TL. For instance, employing the present tense when translating a past event from SL into TL could result in miscommunication. Therefore, it is essential to take into account factors such as the register (formal versus informal), collocations and idioms specific to the TL, sentence length and flow, and cultural nuances. Here are some specific examples for each factor, using English as TL and Vietnamese as SL:

Register (Formal vs. Informal):

“*I would be grateful if you could provide me with a copy of the report.*”

(1) “Cho tôi xem báo cáo đi!”

(2) “Bạn có thể cho tôi một bản sao của báo cáo không?”

The sentence (2) uses a polite and formal tone, which is suitable for a professional or academic setting. Meanwhile, (1) is more informal and direct, which might be appropriate for a casual conversation among friends but could be considered disrespectful in a formal context.

Collocations and Idioms:

“*He kicked the bucket yesterday.*”

(1) “Anh ấy đã đá cái xô hôm qua.”

(2) “Anh ấy đã qua đời hôm qua.”

The literal translation “*đã đá cái xô*” doesn’t convey the meaning of death and would be confusing or inappropriate in most contexts. In the second sentence, which is more appropriate, the idiom “*kicked the bucket*” is directly translated to “*đã qua đời*” and is used to express death in a respectful and euphemistic manner.

Sentence Length and Flow:

“*The book, which was very long and boring, was difficult to read.*”

(1) “Cuốn sách, nó rất dài và nhàm chán, đã khó đọc.”

(2) “Cuốn sách rất dài, nhàm chán, và khó đọc.”

(1) is awkward and repetitive, with the unnecessary pronoun "nó" (it) making the sentence more convoluted, whereas (2) maintains a natural sentence structure and flow, making it easy to understand and follow.

Cultural Nuances:

"The meeting will start at 7 AM."

(1) *"Cuộc họp sẽ bắt đầu lúc 7 giờ."*

(2) *"Cuộc họp sẽ bắt đầu lúc 7 giờ sáng."*

(2) explicitly states that the meeting will start at 7 AM, avoiding any potential misunderstandings. (1) might be interpreted as 7 PM in some Vietnamese cultural contexts, especially in rural areas where the 12-hour clock is more commonly used. This ambiguity could lead to confusion and missed appointments.

By adapting the grammar to the specific context of the TL, translators can create grammatically accurate translations, resonate with the target audience, and effectively express the intended message.

5. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

5.1. Conclusion

Although Larson's and Nida's theories offer valuable insights, they reveal significant gaps. Firstly, traditional definitions, while emphasising meaning preservation, lack specificity regarding the factors influencing accuracy, such as translator competence, text complexity,

and cultural context. Secondly, by excessively focusing on semantic equivalence, other crucial aspects such as tone, style, and pragmatic implications are ignored. Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence, despite being influential, has been criticised for its subjectivity, limited applicability beyond religious texts, and potential for cultural imposition. Finally, the literature lacks a clear and comprehensive set of criteria for assessing accuracy, particularly in light of the increasing role of AI in translation. These gaps necessitate a more nuanced framework for evaluating translation accuracy. The proposed framework consists of various linguistic and pragmatic factors, including equivalent meaning, text organisation, and grammatical aspect. By considering these interconnected elements, this framework provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating the quality and effectiveness of translations, ensuring that they accurately convey not only the denotative meaning but also the intended communicative effect and the nuances of the ST in the TL.

5.2. Implications

The proposed framework is a valuable tool for improving translation processes, training, and assessment. Firstly, it provides an objective, systematized approach to evaluate translation accuracy by identifying lexical and grammatical errors, minimising subjectivity, and standardising assessment, ultimately enhancing translation quality. Secondly, in

translation training, students can use the framework as a benchmark for self-reflection, helping them understand accuracy components and refine their skills. It ensures translations go beyond structural replication, facilitating meaningful communication. Additionally, instructors can use it to design exercises and provide detailed feedback.

Beyond academia, the framework benefits the translation industry by helping clients assess translation service quality and compare providers. Translation companies can apply it to evaluate employee performance or AI-generated translations, improving quality control and fostering transparency. This enhances client trust and strengthens market competitiveness.

As translation evolves alongside technological advancements, maintaining a dialogue between traditional methods and modern innovations is crucial. This ensures translations remain adaptable to diverse communicative needs, ultimately bridging linguistic divides and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

Among the limitations of the study is the absence of empirical data validating the reliability of the proposed framework. Further large-scale empirical research is necessary to apply the framework in evaluating translation accuracy, thereby establishing its reliability. Future studies should develop a scoring rubric based on the framework, as discussed.

Another limitation concerns the generalisability of the framework. While the framework may be suitable for specific text types (e.g., academic, colloquial, or technical writing), its applicability across all translation contexts remains uncertain. Additionally, the framework may function well for certain language pairs, like English-Vietnamese, but it might not be entirely relevant for translations involving other languages. Practical implementation may also demand substantial time and expertise, especially for individuals without a background in translation.

Beyond empirical validation for the framework, further research should explore additional translation quality factors, such as naturalness and other influences on translation outcomes. Besides, the results of translation accuracy assessments using this framework could serve as valuable data for linguistic research, contrastive language analysis, and related fields.

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