

critical assessment of a research article

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With the development of globalization, we can see the texts on the internet becoming more ‘multilingual’. However, the benefit of connecting people across the globe also faces a challenge-----language, which has been recognized as an important carrier of culture (Zhou, 2019). According to Zhao (2016), idioms, as a language form carrying rich cultural meanings, further sublimates language and are the essence of language. They contain heavy cultural characteristics for all languages, for both Chinese and English, who have long history, and these two languages have been developed under the great influence of geography, customs, historical relics, religious beliefs, and so forth. In the process of developing these two languages, idioms serve as an important role in both English and Chinese, containing extremely rich and profound meanings. In the following sections, I will evaluate how Nida’s translation theory of functional equivalence could be applied to address the translation of idioms from Chinese to English, based on my selected peer-reviewed article *Application of Functional Equivalence Theory in English Translation of Chinese Idioms*, written by Zhang & Wang (2010), who has proposed that Nida’s translation theory of functional equivalence helps to overcome the challenges faced by many translation practitioners to some extent.

Nida’s Translation Theory – Functional Equivalence Theory

Translation is one of human activities with a very clear purpose. The purpose of translation is to convert the meaning expressed by the source language into a habitual

way of expression of target language, and to accurately express the original meaning, thereby enabling communication and understanding, which means to 'equal' two languages. Many translation scholars, such as Zeng, (2001), Zhang & Jin (2003) have studied theories in relation to the equivalence between two languages, and among them, the one of the most profound one is Nida's **functional equivalence theory**, which is the theory aiming to be tested in the selected article, to conduct idioms translation from Chinese to English. According to Nida (1993), functional equivalence theory, instead of focusing on verbal comparison between original language and target language, has mainly emphasized on the equivalence between target audiences' **receptions** towards translation and original audience's receptions towards the original texts. This theory suggests that "the relationship of the target language receptors to the target language text should be roughly equivalent to the relationship between the original receptors and the original text." From this perspective, we can know that Nida has focuses on the different cause of receptors' responses between source language and target language such as language function, instead of emphasizing the language forms. Besides, unlike other theories who focus on the single standard of translation, functional equivalence theory does not set a standard for translation, offering more freedom for translators to deal with complicated translations (Li, 2021), which could be impacted by any different factors (i.e the reliability of original text, discourse type, the target audience, the manner of target language and so forth). We should understand that there is no total equivalence, but only equivalence to some degree. What translators seek is the maximum equivalence for the target reader.

The author has proposed an important challenge faced by many translator-----
idiom translation, which has caused many translators failing to convey the meaning of
original language, including only surfacing the meaning of the idioms, ignoring the
figurative meaning due to word-to-word translation, as well as no correspondent
translations in the target languages, both literally and pragmatically. All these problems
could be summarized to the failure of realizing functional equivalence between Chinese
idioms and English language, which in turn, is the Nida's center idea in functional
equivalence theory. As a result, the author has predicted that Nida's translation of
functional equivalence theory is the perfect choice to translate the Chinese idioms into
English language, minimizing the translation errors as well as realize the coherence in
function and form between source language and target language.

Methodology

In the selected article, the author has been applied the methodology of comparative
study analysis and case study methods to test her prediction, which, as said earlier in
the last paragraph, is 'Nida's translation of functional equivalence theory is the perfect
choice to translate the Chinese idioms into English language'. Specifically, the author
has offered some concrete examples, which have been conducted the translation in both
functional equivalence theory and other theories. By using the methods, then the author
could use selected cases to compare and contrast variables and in this case, the variable

is the translation theory, to see their similarities and differences (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017), and which could better convey the meaning and intention of the source language. For example, “有鼻子有眼” is a Chinese idiom to express that someone could describe hearings, rumors and other things she/he does not see in a very specific and detailed way. If we conduct literal translation, it should be “nose and eyes”, which succeed in conveying the image information but fails to convey its implied meaning.

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On the opposite, if we conduct functional equivalence theory in this translation, it will be better to translate it into “to describe a thing vividly”, and the sense of this idiom could be successfully communicated, though the sound and image effects from original text are lost. Another example is a four-character phrase in one of the huge novel in China, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 反而“助纣为虐”, 讨好儿 (Cao, 1973-1982). If we conduct the literary translation, “helping Zhou to do cruel actions”, which will definitely puzzle the target readers since they have no background information about who is ‘纣’. The audience will only pay attention to the literary ing. However, if we conduct the functional equivalence theory in this translation, we could simply rendered literally as “abetted”.

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From my perspective, qualitative methods, including face-to-face interviews and open questionnaires could be applied to test the predictions. If we would like to know which translation theory could better convey the meaning of the source language and maximize the equivalence between two languages, qualitative methods could be good solutions. Qualitative method, including interviews and questionnaires could allow us

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to have more in-depth and further probing and questioning of participants based on their responses (Berg, 2009). According to Corbin,(2008), One of the advantages of this face-to-face interview is that this method could offer a great opportunity to collect data more precisely, in terms of their understanding towards the translation. Besides, if we need more information, it is convenient for us to ask follow-up questions about the translation comparison. Specifically, in a bid to test the hypothesis, we could conduct two methods of translations (such as literal translation and functional equivalence translation and then present each translation to the participants, and then communicate with them about their understanding about each of the translation. Through the interview, we could catch their reactions to the target language immediately, just as the functional equivalence theory emphasized. Besides, when we conduct the in-depth interview, it gives us a better opportunity to notice the respondents' body language and match their reactions (Darlington & Scott, 2003). Additionally, we could monitor their response even with the help of reaction techniques such as the movement of eyeball, slight face expression to catch their immediate reactions to the translation. Obviously, we could image that when a participant buckle their lips, or raise their eyebrows, this translation may cause them into confused situation. If a participant show the expression of 'here you are', then we could speculate the translation goes smoothly in the target audience. But we should notice that the above are the speculation, and we should verify participants understanding when we have deep conversation with them.

With regards to language-related testing, for instance, Bachman (1998) displayed

in his study which indicates that qualitative research results offers the relationship of translation information processing with performance specifically and deeply. Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008), also, suggested that qualitative method is applied in a bid to achieve more in-depth insights in terms of issues related to interpreting language assessment.

In summary, from face-to-face interviews, we could collect precise data about their understanding about each translation. On the other hands, questionnaires could be handed out to a larger size of participants, which compensate for the disadvantages of face-to-face interviews. As a result, we could obtain more samples in the survey to collect more comprehensive and accurate information regarding which theory is better in translating idioms. This could help us to eliminate the sampling error due to inadequate sample size to some extent. In summary, qualitative methods could help us to obtain detailed description of participants' reactions, feelings and opinions and then interpret the meaning of their actions (Denzin, 1989).

Results and Relevance to Theory

The result, in this article, is clear that Nida's functional equivalence theory to the translation of Chinese idioms have opened both theoretical and practical implications, helping to overcome some challenges faced by many translation practitioners. For one thing, when translating the idioms, translators are supposed to take three aspects into

considerations, namely equivalence, target audience' response and diversity, just as Nida (1969) suggested. Practically, it has illustrated by several examples in this article. Under the guidance of Nida's functional equivalence theory, the translation of Chinese idiom translation, for one thing, could help to promote cultural exchange between China and English language nations, and for the other, help us to understand that there is no total equivalence in translation, but rather the some degree of equivalence.

Therefore, the result could support the theory clarified in this paper. The author firstly discover the difficulties in translating idioms. Due to some unique characteristics of Chinese idioms, many translators, without the background knowledge of Chinese cultures, fail to realize the figurative meaning in Chinese idioms, and only focus on the literal meaning, which disobey the idea of Nida's functional equivalence ----- Meaning is the most important content in translation, and the form of the article is secondary. To accurately convey the meaning of Chinese idioms, meaning is priority. If the translation of idioms only 'literally' equivalent and fails to express the cultural heritage and intended cultural meaning contained in the source language, then the translation will lose its meaning. As a result, the author propose that Nida's functional equivalence theory in idiom translation, combining the cultural characteristics of the source language and translate it into the target language with the consistent meaning, is a good choice for Chinese idiom translation.

However, as a matter of fact, the author do not spend much work on collecting the data, which is a missing part in this article. The author mainly search for the data from several translations of Chinese idioms and then conduct comparative analysis between these translations. In the process of analyzing these cases, the author then concluded that Nida's functional equivalence theory, as predicted, could overcome the problem of neglecting figurative meaning in Chinese idioms translation, minimizing the errors caused by cultural bridge in translation and in the meantime, achieving the coherence in function. Besides, the author finally bring up a new finding of Nida's functional equivalence theory, which could help to promote cultural exchange between China and English. They prove this opinion by using an example of Chinese idioms translation '三顾茅庐' which is applied the translation method of Literal Translation with Annotation, as one of the translation method in functional equivalence theory. With the annotation of historical background or its origin (During the period of the Three Kingdoms, AD 220-280, Liu Bei called three times as an unbidden guest at the lonely hut of Zhuge Liang known as the political genius of the age), the target audience could further absorbs the Chinese culture behind the literal meaning of 'visiting the hut for three times'. Besides, another new result discovered in the process of comparison also supports one of the important notion in functional equivalence theory-----there is no total equivalence, but the equivalence to some degree. This result conveys that what translators aim to realize is to maximum the language equivalence for the target audience.

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critical assessment of a research article

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

58/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Some identification of key issues from the research article. You demonstrate reading of relevant literature from a variety of sources. This is fairly well presented, but there are problems with expression and coherence in some parts. You need to proof-read carefully.

It is a satisfactory answer, but the arguments need further development.

There is some thought given to selection of material, but the research methods reading could be extended much further.

Overall a good effort which you can build upon in your next assignment. The style does need to be more academic and we need application of theory.

1. Read more around the subject.
2. Check your syntax and grammar carefully.
3. Try to elaborate on key research theory.
4. The references are very limited for this level of study. Check whether there are more recent references. and these will need to be acknowledged fully.

5.What
specific methodology is being used in order to test
the prediction(s) /
hypothesis?

What alternative methodology could have been
used?
Provide arguments in support of your answer.

PAGE 1



Comment 1

This is incomplete. Which aspects of language do you want to consider?



Comment 2

Why use a capital letter for idioms?



Comment 3

Subject-verb agreement - 'have'



Comment 4

Necessary detail??

PAGE 2



Comment 5

capital letters



Comment 6

do you mean recipients' responses? Is this a technical term?



Comment 7

which



Comment 8

Agreed languages rarely map closely to each other.

PAGE 3



Comment 9

the precise meaning?



Comment 10

central idea.

Strikethrough.



Comment 12

tense - realizing

Strikethrough.



Comment 14

incomplete syntax.

PAGE 4



Comment 15

Do you mean on the other hand ?



Comment 16

singular - idiom



Comment 17

literary or literal meaning?



Comment 18

questionnaires are not qualitative !

PAGE 5



Comment 19

What alternative methodology could have been used? Provide arguments in support of your answer.



Comment 20

in or with?



Comment 21

Menaing unclear.

PAGE 6



Comment 22

number of participants.



Comment 23

Are you advooating mixed methods research here?

PAGE 7



Comment 24

How ? Give further details please.

Strikethrough.

PAGE 8



Comment 26

What is original here?



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PAGE 9



Comment 27

This is the second module and you have not been paying attention to Harvard referencing.

PAGE 10



Comment 28

All references should be alphabetical in the list !!



Comment 29

Please use the Harvard referencing as we discussed with the academic librarian in class. The UWTSD has an updated reference guide for your records.