Thesis Title:

CHALLENGES OF ACHIEVING EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION: A LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Translation is more than a word-for-word conversion between two languages. It is a complex process that involves rendering meaning, tone, and cultural nuances. One of the major challenges in this process is achieving equivalence—the degree to which the translated text reflects the original in meaning and impact. This thesis examines the linguistic and cultural barriers to achieving equivalence and presents strategies that professional translators use to address these issues.

Main Body

Understanding Equivalence in Translation

Equivalence refers to the relationship between a source language (SL) text and a target language (TL) text that allows the TL text to serve the same function as the SL text. Scholars like Vinay and Darbelnet and Nida have contributed theories distinguishing types of equivalence, such as:

Semantic Equivalence – preserving meaning

Functional Equivalence – focusing on effect or purpose

Textual Equivalence – ensuring cohesion and structure match the original

Linguistic Barriers to Equivalence

Syntax Differences: English and other languages often differ in word order and sentence structure

Word Ambiguity: Some words have multiple meanings or no direct equivalents in the target language

Idiomatic Expressions: Phrases like "kick the bucket" may lose meaning if translated literally

Cultural Barriers to Equivalence

Cultural-Specific Concepts: Holidays, food, traditions, or historical references may not exist in the target culture

Politeness and Formality: Different cultures express respect and hierarchy differently

Humor and Irony: These often rely on shared cultural knowledge and may not translate effectively

Solutions to Overcome Equivalence Problems

Adaptation: Changing culture-specific terms to relatable alternatives

Modulation: Changing the form but keeping the meaning (e.g., "It is not difficult" → "It is easy")

Footnotes and Explanations: Especially for academic or literary texts

Using Corpus and Parallel Texts: To find how similar expressions are translated in real-world usage

Conclusion

Achieving equivalence in translation is not about creating identical texts, but about transferring the same meaning, function, and emotional impact. The process requires not only strong linguistic knowledge but also cultural sensitivity and creativity. With the use of appropriate strategies and a deep understanding of both source and target cultures, translators can produce faithful and effective translations