# "ADEQUACY AS A CENTRAL CATEGORY OF TRANSLATION THEORY: THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND INTERPRETATIONS"

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***Abstract***

This article examines the concept of adequacy as one of the key categories in translation theory and practice. The study analyzes the historical development of the notion of "adequate translation," beginning with early literal and free translation approaches and continuing through modern functional-pragmatic interpretations. Particular attention is devoted to the views of major translation scholars, including Andrey Fedorov, Alexander Schweitzer, Gideon Toury, and Albrecht Neubert. The article investigates semantic, stylistic, communicative, and pragmatic dimensions of adequacy and demonstrates that adequate translation cannot be reduced to literal equivalence. The research concludes that adequacy represents a dynamic and multifunctional category aimed at preserving the communicative intention, stylistic characteristics, and pragmatic effect of the source text while respecting the norms of the target language.

**Keywords:** adequacy, translation theory, equivalence, pragmatic translation, communicative function, stylistic transformation, source text, target language.

## *Introduction*

The problem of adequacy occupies a central place in modern translation studies. Since translation is not merely a linguistic substitution of units from one language into another but also a complex communicative and cultural process, the

issue of how accurately and effectively the original message can be reproduced has remained a subject of continuous scholarly debate. The notion of adequacy reflects the translator's attempt to preserve not only semantic meaning but also stylistic, pragmatic, emotional, and cultural aspects of the source text.

Historically, translation theory developed through the opposition between literal and free translation. Early translators often regarded literal translation as the most faithful method because it reproduced the lexical structure of the original text. However, such translations frequently failed to convey artistic expressiveness and communicative impact. In contrast, free translation prioritized general meaning and artistic effect over linguistic precision. During the eighteenth century, the so-called "corrective translation" became widespread; translators adapted original texts according to the aesthetic principles of classicism.

By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concept of "adequate translation" gradually replaced earlier notions such as "correct" or "literal" translation. Adequacy came to signify a translation that successfully conveys the meaning and artistic value of the original while remaining natural within the target language system. This evolution marked a transition from purely linguistic interpretations toward communicative and functional approaches to translation.

The relevance of the present study is determined by the continuing theoretical uncertainty surrounding the concept of adequacy. Despite extensive scholarly attention, translation theorists continue to interpret adequacy differently, emphasizing semantic precision, stylistic correspondence, communicative effect, or pragmatic orientation. Consequently, there remains a need for a systematic examination of the principal approaches to adequacy in translation theory.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical foundations of adequacy, identify its essential characteristics, and examine the evolution of scholarly interpretations within modern translation studies.

### *Historical Development of the Concept of Adequacy*

The concept of adequacy emerged gradually during the development of translation theory. Early discussions focused mainly on the opposition between literal and free translation. Literal translation aimed at preserving the lexical and grammatical structure of the source text, while free translation prioritized the transmission of general meaning and artistic effect.

According to Givi Gachechiladze, literary translation constantly oscillates between two extremes: “a literally accurate but artistically weak translation” and “an artistically complete but textually distant translation.” This observation illustrates the inherent contradiction between linguistic fidelity and artistic expressiveness in translation practice.

As translation studies evolved into an independent academic discipline during the twentieth century, scholars began to reconsider the concept of adequacy from broader perspectives. Andrey Fedorov interpreted adequacy as “complete semantic and stylistic equivalence.” In his view, an adequate translation must preserve both the meaning and stylistic organization of the original text. At the same time, some scholars criticized the vagueness of the term itself. Isaak Revzin and Victor Rosenzweig argued that categories such as “adequate,” “literal,” and “free” translation lacked scientific precision and should be replaced with more objective terminology. They emphasized the distinction between linguistic correspondences and aesthetic phenomena, particularly in poetic translation.

Despite such criticism, adequacy continued to occupy a dominant position in translation theory because it addressed the practical necessity of balancing fidelity to the original with the communicative needs of the target audience.

### *Semantic and Stylistic Approaches to Adequacy*

One of the earliest systematic interpretations of adequacy was based on semantic and stylistic equivalence. During the 1950s and 1960s, scholars such as Roman Jakobson and Andrey Fedorov emphasized the importance of preserving semantic accuracy and stylistic integrity in translation. Within this framework, adequacy implied: accurate transmission of meaning; preservation of stylistic characteristics; maintenance of structural organization; conformity with the norms of the target language.

This approach viewed the source text as the central reference point for translation. Adequate translation was therefore considered the closest possible semantic and stylistic reproduction of the original text.

However, scholars soon recognized that semantic equivalence alone could not guarantee successful communication. Literal accuracy often produced unnatural or stylistically awkward translations that failed to evoke the intended response from target readers. Consequently, researchers began to explore the communicative and pragmatic dimensions of translation.

### *Pragmatic and Functional Approaches*

The emergence of communication theory and functional linguistics significantly influenced translation studies during the second half of the twentieth century. Scholars increasingly emphasized the communicative purpose of translation rather than strict formal equivalence. A major contribution to this shift was made by Alexander Schweitzer, who argued that adequacy depends primarily on the successful transmission of the pragmatic aspects of the original text. According to Schweitzer, translation often requires compromise because complete reproduction of all communicative and stylistic features is impossible. Therefore, translators

must determine which elements are functionally dominant and preserve them even at the expense of less essential details.

Similarly, Albrecht Neubert emphasized the central role of pragmatics in translation. He argued that the primary goal of translation is the preservation of pragmatic relationships between the speaker and the recipient. From this perspective, adequacy depends not on formal similarity but on the ability of the translated text to produce a comparable communicative effect.

The pragmatic approach introduced several important principles:

1) Translation is fundamentally communicative.
2) Preservation of communicative intention is more important than literal correspondence.
3) Pragmatic adaptation may require structural transformations.
4) The translator must consider the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience.

This functional orientation substantially broadened the concept of adequacy and moved translation theory beyond rigid linguistic equivalence.

### *Adequacy and Equivalence*

The relationship between adequacy and equivalence remains one of the most debated issues in translation theory. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, many scholars distinguish between them.

Equivalence generally refers to the relationship between individual units of the source and target texts, whereas adequacy concerns the overall success of the translation process within a specific communicative context. Gideon Toury proposed a descriptive approach to translation, arguing that adequacy should be understood as the maximum possible correspondence between the translated text

and the original within the constraints of the target language system. According to Toury, every translation represents a compromise between adequacy and acceptability. The translator must balance fidelity to the source text with conformity to the norms and conventions of the target culture. This interpretation highlights the dynamic nature of adequacy. Since languages and cultures differ structurally and conceptually, complete equivalence is unattainable. Therefore, adequate translation inevitably involves transformation, adaptation, and selective preservation of textual elements.

### *Adequacy in Literary Translation*

The problem of adequacy becomes especially complex in literary translation because literary texts contain not only semantic information but also aesthetic, emotional, and symbolic dimensions.

According to numerous scholars, adequate literary translation requires the preservation of: imagery; rhythm and sound organization; stylistic individuality; emotional tone; cultural symbolism; pragmatic effect.

Alexander Smirnov proposed an influential interpretation of adequate translation as the reproduction of the author's intended ideological and emotional effect on the reader. In this view, stylistic devices and artistic elements should not be treated as isolated formal structures but as instruments for achieving an overall aesthetic impact.

This perspective is particularly important for poetic translation, where strict literal correspondence often destroys artistic expression. Adequate translation therefore requires creative transformation rather than mechanical substitution.

Modern translation theory recognizes that literary adequacy depends on the translator's ability to reproduce the communicative and aesthetic atmosphere of the original while maintaining readability and naturalness in the target language.

## *Conclusion*

The analysis of various theoretical approaches demonstrates that adequacy is a multidimensional and dynamic category within translation studies. Throughout the historical development of translation theory, scholars have interpreted adequacy from semantic, stylistic, communicative, pragmatic, and functional perspectives. Early theories emphasized literal fidelity and semantic precision, whereas later approaches focused on communicative purpose and pragmatic effect. Contemporary translation studies generally regard adequacy as the successful reproduction of the essential communicative, stylistic, and pragmatic characteristics of the source text within the norms of the target language and culture.

Thus, adequate translation cannot be reduced to simple linguistic equivalence. It involves a complex interaction between meaning, form, style, pragmatics, and cultural context. An adequate translation preserves the communicative intention of the original author while simultaneously ensuring accessibility and effectiveness for the target audience.

In conclusion, adequacy should be understood as a flexible and context-dependent category that reflects the translator's ability to balance fidelity to the source text with the communicative and cultural requirements of the target language.

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