West enters East: A strange case of unequal equivalences in Soviet translation theory

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Translation Studies developed on both sides of the Cold War with a remarkable lack of comparative perspectives, often as two separate hubs. Soviet thinking about translation was nevertheless influenced by Western theories in the mid 1970s, generally coinciding with renewed promises from machine translation and a thaw in Cold War relations. The Soviet discourse of "exactitude" and "adequacy" was thus put into contact with a recent Western discourse based on "transformation" and "equivalence". Evidence of this can be seen in the history of the term "equivalence", which prior to the 1970s broadly implied one-to-one correspondence, and yet after the 1970s was more generally understood as the textual result, on whatever level, of linguistic transformation.

[A] Revolutionary beginnings

Our story starts with a key date: the October Revolution of 1917 shaped the political, social and economic future of eastern European countries for the following seventy years or so. It also created a favorable atmosphere for avant-garde thinking and performance, resulting in major advances in astronomy, physics, aesthetics, linguistics and many other fields. One area of progress was the as yet undefined field of Translation Studies, where a large-scale literary project was to propel advances.

The ambitious Vsemirnaya literatura [World Literature] project originated in 1918 (CHUKOVSKIY [1941]/2001: 7), right after the Revolution, with the aim of (re)translating into Russian the major literary classics of the 18th to 20th centuries. The general argument was that the existing translations were not as good as they should be: poems had been presented in prose, and fiction had been transferred in a highly literal fashion. Previous translations were thus written off as "primitive and unprincipled" (NOVIKOVA 2012: 73), as the work of amateur translators with limited translation skills. It would be logical to assume that all the new translations would be made to adhere to the newly introduced Socialist ideology. After all, the project was financed thanks to a financial agreement between Gorkiy and Lunacharskiy, the highly educated People's Commissar for Enlightenment (for "Narkompros" = Narodnyy Komissariat Prosveshcheniya [People's ~~Comissariat~~Commissariat for Enlightenment], which could also be "Education and Culture"), who had studied in Zurich, could read some eight languages, and genuinely cared about educating the proletariat (which might indeed be a reason for retaining "Enlightenment" as our translation of "Narkompros"). Lenin himself was very

aware of the translation project. Indeed, Chukovskiy, one of the most prominent translation scholars of the period and a very active member of the Vsemirnaya Literatura undertaking, called it a "matter of state importance" ([1941]/2001: 10). This may be the reason why the leading Soviet academics, writers and translators, working under the leadership of Maxim Gorkiy, sought to create a series of translation principles or guidelines.

The purpose of the project was not initially to impose any single model of translation, since "the translators engaged in it were largely recruited from among writers with prerevolutionary careers, likely to have strong individual agendas" (WITT 2011: 155). Some opposed the idea of creating guidelines or a single model, assuming that the literary translator is a craftsman, an artist, who should not and cannot adhere to norms or rules. Debates over the issue continued into the 1930s and 1940s (on which, see BEDSON & SCHULZ 2015, BEDSON & SCHULZ in this volume), leading to the formation of two opposing groups: one side, led by Evgeniy Lann and Georgiy Shengeli, defended translation as set of techniques leading to exactitude, while the other, led by Ivan Kashkin, defended translation as artistic translation (see MARKISH 2004). This opposition might be seen as a crucible of Soviet Translation Studies, albeit traditionally under the name of "translation theory" (see PYM & AYVAZYAN 2015).

Korney Chukovskiy was one of the most important literary figures of the moment. To the general public he was very well known thanks to his extremely popular children's literature, but he was many other things as well: a literary critic, journalist, poet, writer, translator and translation theorist. He was also one of the main members of the Vsemirnaya Literatura group. He was also well known for his hot temper. In 1918, during one of the meetings of Vsemirnaya Literatura, Chukovskiy engaged in an argument with Nikolay Gumilev, another prominent literary critic, poet and translator, over whether or not translation procedures would be at all reasonable:

At the meeting I had a heated debate with Gumilev. This talented craftsman has taken into his head to create guidelines for translators. In my opinion, there can be no such guidelines. What guidelines can there be in literature? One translator writes, and it goes perfectly, and the other even gives it rhythm and everything – but, alas, it does not move your soul. What guidelines can there be? Gumilev became angry and started shouting. But he is amusing and I like him a lot. (Nov 12, 1918) (CHUKOVSKAYA ed 2003: 109, trans. Nune Ayvazyan, here and throughout)

The clash should be placed in a highly politicized context, where similar confrontations were happening elsewhere. For instance, the scholar and professor Fedor Batyushkov, who had been appointed administrator of the theatres in Saint Petersburg prior to the October Revolution, now pushed for self-administration of the theatres, with the inherited state funds to be distributed among theatres and actors. On 10 December Lunacharskiy (the same People's Commissar for Enlightenment) nevertheless instructed Batyushkov to "regulate the relations of the democracy and the theatres of the Republic" (FITZPATRICK 2002: 117); Batyushkov refused, defending artistic independence; he was subsequently dismissed. The question of rules for art was not merely academic and it was not just for translators.

Resistance to revolutionary regulation was not to last long. In 1919, the year following the reported argument about translation, there appeared a brochure called *Printsipy khudozhestvennogo perevoda* [Principles of Literary Translation], co-authored by Chukovskiy (who had previously argued that such things should not exist), Gumilev (who had reportedly shouted at Chukovskiy on this very issue) and Fedor Batyushkov

(apparently the same professor who had defended artistic independence in the theatres), in support of a project financed thanks to Lunacharskiy (who had opposed Batyushkov over the freedom of the theatres). Various political compromises had obviously been reached. The brochure was designed to present basic translation principles to translators, mentioning that translations should be "adequate". It was reprinted in 1920 (with a very small print-run) and eventually served as a basis for Chukovskiy's *Iskusstvo perevoda* [The art of translation] (1930), which was to have a long and fairly glorious history, eventually finding English translation in 1984.

[A] Adequacy, exactness and value in translation

In the various rules and guidelines of Soviet period there were many ways to refer to a "good" translation: *tochniy* [exact], *adekvatniy* [adequate] and *polnotsenniy* [full value] were among the common terms. These three seem to have been used interchangeably to mean that a translation was not "literal" or "word for word". However, there are slight differences between the three.

It looks like the adjective *tochniy* [exact] actually stood for two opposing ideas. The first was the literal way of translating that the formalists were accused of employing. For example, Chukovskiy ([1941]/2001: 52) accused Lann of translating Dickens' works with "pedanticheskaya tochnost'" [a pedantic exactitude]: "Instead of translating laugh for a laugh, smile for a smile, Evgeniy Lann, like a diligent student, together with A. V. Krivtsova, translated only words, only phrases, not worrying about the reproduction of live intonations of speech, its emotional coloring." Chukovskiy gives an example of Lann's mistaken exactitude: "In his works one constantly finds calques like this: "On v ujasnom sostoyanii lyubvi" (in the horrible state of love)." (CHUKOVSKIY 1941/2001: 161)

In 1930, Chukovskiy's *Iskusstvo perevoda*, this time co-authored with the still young Andrey Fedorov, discusses the concept of "netochnaya tochnost'" [inexact exactitude], understood as syntactic literalism that renders foreign texts into Russian in a clumsy and heavy manner. Chukovskiy also insists there cannot be absolute correspondence between languages:

[…] it is very easy to prove that by calquing foreign syntax or even by rendering exact reproduction of every single word we do not give a true representation of the original. And this is because in each language each word is linked with quite different associations. In each language there is a different hierarchy of words. The style of the same words in two close languages is completely different. (CHUKOVSKIY [1941]/2001: 53)

At the same time, *tochniy* could also mean exact fidelity to the spirit of the original, that is, a translation that conserved the precise content or the intention of the author. In this sense, as Azov (2013:16) points out, there was a general consensus that *tochniy* meant a translation was a good one.

In the same period, other translator-scholars were also trying to categorize general translation solutions. In an encyclopedia article on translation, Aleksandr Smirnov (1934) pointed out that all translations are necessarily *inexact* ("netochniy"). He then differentiates two general instances of inexactness: those that are very evident and those that are subtler. The solutions classified as "evident inexactness" are as follows:

1. Free translation bordering on retelling

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2. Magnifying translations
3. Adaptation (reductions or amplifications on the text level)
4. Direct falsification (changing of content as a consequence of ideological beliefs).

The procedures under the category of "subtle inexactness" are then:

1. Explanatory translation (when a translator thinks that an exact rendering of the text segment would be unclear or confusing)
2. Omission or simplification
3. Embellishment or enhancement of the original.

We could thus say that the term *tochniy* was the most confusing of all, hence the least common, until it was eventually dropped. After all, if there is no absolute correspondence between languages (CHUKOVSKIY [1941]/2001: 53, but also FEDOROV 1953: 111), then inexactness is everywhere and the term itself has little analytical power.

The term *adekvatniy*, on the other hand, was used quite frequently from the start. Although of visibly foreign origin, it was accepted as a Russian term, at least until the 1950s. In the 1919 *Printsipy* brochure, Batyushkov's article "Zadachi khudozhestvennikh perevodov" [Problems of literary translations] tackles the question of what an "adequate" translation is (see NOVIKOVA 2012), positing that it has the following characteristics:

1. Exact transfer of meaning
2. The closest possible perception of style
3. Retention of the peculiarity of the author's language, without breaking the structure and the main grammatical rules of the target language
4. Preservation of the external emotionality (*emotsional'nost*) of literary language.

Batyushkov is saying that faithfulness to the start text is important, but not to the extent of distorting the natural flow of the target language.

In the same 1919 brochure, Gumilev's text "Perevody stikhotvornye" [Verse translations] highlights the importance of the "*adequate* impression of the original" (GUMILEV 1919; our emphasis), apparently assuming that the reader knows what is meant.

In his encyclopedia entry of 1934, Smirnov then gives a definition of "adekvatniy perevod" [adequate translation]:

An adequate translation conveys the author's entire intention (both thought-out and unconscious) as [realized by] a certain ideological and emotional literary impact on the reader, to match as far as possible – through exact equivalents [putem tochnikh ekvivalentov] or satisfactory substitution [ili udovletvoritel'nikh substitutov (podstanovok)] – all the resources used by the author with respect to imagery, color, rhythm, etc., these resources being considered not as ends in themselves but only as a means to achieve the overall effect. (SMIRNOV 1934: unno paginatede)

It is interesting to see how Smirnov interweaves the ideas of "exactitude" and "adequacy" in the same text, suggesting that the two might ultimately be compatible. He also sneaks in another term, "equivalent", to which we shall return.

Once it was agreed that the term *adekvatniy* was more serviceable as a term than *tochniy*, some scholars sought to replace it with the more visibly Russian term *polnotsenniy* (full value). Fedorov (1953) refers to *polnotsenniy* as an opposite of formal exactitude (i.e. literalism). He also criticizes Smirnov's definition of *adekvatniy* as being vague, nevertheless allowing that "[t]here are no further proposals to define the idea of full value (adequacy) other than the one provided by Smirnov" (FEDOROV 1953: 113). Fedorov then goes on to propose his own definition of "full value" (or "adequacy"), consistently using the term *polonotsennost'* [full value] for the purpose:

A full-value translation implies exhaustive accuracy in the transfer of the semantic content of the original and full functional-stylistic correspondence. […] A full-value translation means transferring a specific relation between the content and form in the original by reproducing the features of the form or creating functional correspondence to those features. […] A full-value translation presupposes a certain balance between the whole and the parts, and especially between the general character of the work and the degree of proximity to the original in the transmission of each particular segment. (FEDOROV 1953: 114)

However confusing these three terms *tochniy*, *adekvatniy* and *polnotsenniy* may have been, they all had the same basic purpose: to define what a translation had to have in order to be considered "good".

[A] Equivalence as problem

Closely related to "adequacy" is something called "equivalence", since the two terms very often appeared next to each other, as we have seen in Smirnov (1934). For the most part of the twentieth century, the Russian tradition used the term *ekvivalent* [equivalent] to refer to one-to-one interlingual correspondence at word level. This is precisely the way Smirnov used the term in his 1934 definition of "adequate translation": "…through exact equivalents [putem tochnikh ekvivalentov] or satisfactory substitution[1]…" (Smirnov 1934: unpaginated~~no page~~). This kind of equivalent would involve the exact matches as in the case of fixed technical terms, and could be opposed to all the kinds of "substitution" that required changes in linguistic form.
　　Fedorov (1953) referred to the idea of equivalence in a similar sense, albeit resisting the foreign-sounding word: he preferred to speak about *sootvetsvie* [correspondence] (Fedorov 1953:122), defined as follows:

In translation, when transferring the meaning of a word, one usually has to choose between several options. These are the three most typical cases:
1. In the target language there is no corresponding word for a specific word in the start language.
2. Correspondence is partial, that is, partially covering the meaning of the foreign word.
3. A word in the start language that has multiple meanings corresponds to different words in the target language, which transfer the meaning of the start word to a certain degree. (FEDOROV 1953: 122)

However much Fedorov preferred *sootvetsvie* [correspondence], the term "equivalence" was being used in the same way in the same period. In "O zakonomernikh

sootvetsviyakh pri perevode na rodnoy yazyk" [On regularities in correspondence in translation into the native language] (1950) Yakov Retsker points out that an "adequate" translation can be achieved through the application of three categories of systematic correspondence: *ekvivalenty* [equivalents], *analogi* [analogs] and *adekvatnye zameny* [adequate substitutions]. Here equivalence is clearly used in a very restricted manner, a "one-to-one relationship": "An equivalent is a fixed correspondence that for a particular time and place no longer depends on the context" (RETSKER 1950: 157). Sobolev's "O mere tochnosti v perevode" [On the measure of exactitude in translation] (1950), published in the same volume as Retsker's text, uses the term *ekvivalent* with the same restricted meaning. Here, interestingly enough, Sobolev also talks about "exact translation" [*tochniy perevod*]:

What is exact translation? If we are talking about a separate word, for example, stul [chair], it looks like it will be enough to substitute it with its French, English, German equivalents [ekvivalent]: chaise, chair, Stuhl, etc. But are there always the right equivalents? Those who compile dictionaries know very well that this is not at all the case. (SOBOLEV 1950: 141)

All these early definitions of equivalence (or of "correspondence" in Fedorov) effectively used the concept as a grounding or zero-point for their various subsequent categorizations of translation solution types. The term was not just naming a thing; it was operating as the base of a whole way of thinking about translation.

[A] Meanwhile in the West…

Garbovskiy (2007: 264) suggests that the first recorded instance of the term "equivalent" as a translational relationship appeared in Baudelaire in 1864: "Le mot *infini*, comme les mots *Dieu, esprit* et quelques autres expressions, dont les *équivalents* existent dans toutes les langues […]" (1864: 33; our emphasis). Baudelaire was actually translating Edgar Allan Poe's prose poem *Eureka* (1848), where we are told that "infinity", "like 'God', 'spirit', and some other expressions of which the *equivalents* exist in all languages, is by no means the expression of an idea – but of an effort at one" ([1848]/2011: 18; our emphasis). There are probably many similar usages prior to anything like Translation Studies as such, but Poe and Baudelaire at least serve to underscore that the term was in circulation, that it was not necessarily tied to the rise of mathematics or any assumption that all languages were fundamentally the same, and that writers in Russian could probably have borrowed it from any of several European languages, without waiting for Western translation theorists.

    Notions of equivalence were not predominant in Western theorizing until towards the end of the 1950s, that is, *later* than the Soviet authors we have been looking at above. The initial sense of "equivalence", as in the Soviet tradition, was as a baseline simple translatability that then enabled the more exciting formal changes to be identified. In 1958 Vinay and Darbelnet thus ask, "is LENTEMENT really the equivalent of SLOW?" ([1958]/1972: 18), which implies that equivalence is the thing to be aimed for when translating. Similarly, the Harvard philosopher Willard Quine hypothesized that a translation manual would list translated items in two languages that "stand to each other in no plausible sort of equivalence relation however loose" (1960: 27), which again presupposes that equivalence, even if not attained, is still what translators aim for (rather like the transcendent aspiration that Poe was talking about). Writing in English in the same years, the Harvard-ensconced Russian Roman Jakobson

notes in the same vein that in interlingual translation "there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages" (JAKOBSON 1959: 114). That is, equivalence may exist as some kind of full and immediate translatability, but there is normally hermeneutic work and linguistic transformation to do. In all these usages, equivalence is certainly present, but it is served up with healthy helpings of skepticism.

There were, however, other senses of equivalence that were operative at the same time. We find one of them in Vinay and Darbelnet when they define *équivalence* in the following way:

Translation procedure that accounts for the same situation as in the original, but with an entirely different expression, for example 'The story so far' rendered as 'résumé des chapitres précédents' ['summary of the previous chapters']. (VINAY & DARBELNET [1958]/1972: Glossary)

Here we find that *équivalence* presupposes *transformation*, to the extent that Chesterman (1989: 67) renders the term as "total syntagmatic change". What is going on here? How could this radical transformational sense be used in the same work as the passing reference to "equivalents" as acceptable translations?

Part of the problem here could be that Vinay and Darbelnet were borrowing concepts from the Swiss linguist Charles Bally, who talked about intralingual (not translational) equivalence from 1909. In Bally we actually find several senses at work. On the one hand, pieces of language have a "logical equivalent", understood as a "simple notion" that can then be used in order to classify them ([1909]/1951: 1.30, 96) (for example, grammatical relations like POSSESSION + OBJECT); on the other, there is something called "equivalence in context" ([1909]/1951: 1.105), later called "functional equivalences" (*équivalences fonctionnelles*), of which an example is the series: *the house my father owns*, *of which my father is the owner*, *belonging to my father*, *owned by my father*, *my father's house* ([1932]/1965: 40). Bally emphasizes that the logical and functional equivalents rarely coincide – when they do, we have expression of the "pure idea" ([1909]/1951: 1.105). Further, these equivalences "are only justifiable to the extent that we are only looking for points of comparison so that we can identify the stylistic value of the linguistic facts" ([1909]/1951: 1.109). Bally's concern was with the extreme variety and *affectivité* of language (perhaps its *emotsional'nost*). The implicit idealism of equivalence was perhaps no more than an operative fiction necessary for his methodology.

When this "functional" understanding of equivalence enters Western Translation Studies as such, it is again used in at least two rather different ways.

In Vinay and Darbelnet, the idealism is pushed to the point where equivalence cannot normally be produced by translators but must be found in "a text spontaneously emitted by a monolingual brain" ([1958]/1972: 19). For example, to find the equivalent of a road sign in the United States, you have to look at what is on a road sign in France, as the result of a process of parallel linguistic *production*. This is what has elsewhere been called "natural equivalence" (PYM [2010]/2014). That was in 1958.

A few years later, in 1964, we find Eugene Nida proposing that similarly "natural" equivalents can be reached by applying the transformations of generative grammar, most of which he actually drew from Harris (1957). He distinguished between "dynamic" and "formal" equivalence (the latter was later termed "formal correspondence"), but these were only two poles between which equivalence could be

established on many different levels. As in Vinay and Darbelnet, equivalence here is generally the result of *changing* linguistic forms.

The following year, in 1965, John Catford shares this idealism of the "natural" but more clearly starts out from the *perception* of translations: textual translation equivalents are "any TL form (text or portion of text) which is *observed to be* the equivalent of a given SL form (text or portion of text)" (CATFORD 1965: 27, our emphasis). This could mean that the translator and/or the people using a translation accept that there is equivalence, and the observation requires no further certitude. This observed kind of equivalence can now be at any level, ranging from the narrow relations found in official terminologies to "free" translation, where "equivalences shunt up and down the rank scale, but tend to be at the higher ranks" (1965: 25). The concept of equivalence covers the whole range of what makes a translation a translation, from one-to-one certitude through to free recreation of perceived intention.

In Catford we find thus an elegant and potentially empirical account of textual equivalence. Further, the term's dancing partner here is actually something called "formal correspondence", of the kind that would see, say, the grammatical category "preposition" in English as corresponding to the category "préposition" in French (that is, the grammatical categories correspond, over and above equivalence between the prepositions themselves or the names of the categories) (CATFORD 1965: 32). This recalls the "logical equivalents" of Bally.

So equivalence broke into two things: the narrow kind, suitable for technical terms and the like, became "correspondence", while the broader kind, requiring transformation in order to maintain function, became "equivalence" *tout court*. And at the same time, it became possible to use the term "equivalence" to describe a whole range of translation solutions (as noted, Nida's "formal correspondence" was also called "formal equivalence", just to mix things up).

The various confusing plays between these different senses, insufficiently distinguished as terms, allowed for numerous misunderstandings and puerile debates (see SNELL-HORNBY 1988: 22; PYM 1995). In English, the term "equivalence" tended to broaden, to the point where anything presented as a translation was considered equivalent (as in TOURY 1980); in German, it seems to have retained its more restrictive sense, to the point where *Skopos* theory (at least in REISS & VERMEER 1984: 138; VERMEER 1989: 120) could rephrase it as a professionally restrictive "functional consistency" and then *oppose* it to "adequacy to purpose", to which we shall return.

Those, however, were later developments. The moment of connection with the Soviet tradition seems to have occurred earlier, in the 1970s, primarily in the reception of Catford.

[A] West enters East?

The literature shows no explicit record of East and West having worked together in the foundations of Translation Studies, much less so at the beginning of the Vesmirnaya Literatura and subsequent translation projects. Much as we would like to show someone like Bally influencing the Russians' stylistics of the early twentieth century, we are in no position to make any strong claims in that regard. From the 1950s there was nevertheless clear awareness, both in Soviet discourse and in Western texts, of what each side was doing, albeit often framed in the antagonistic terms of the Cold War. For example, in 1956 Antokol'skiy made the following comparison of concepts of translatability:

We know, for example, that now in the West the British and the French resolutely refuse poetry translation, replacing it with chopped, prosaic language. They obviously proceed from the belief that poetry is untranslatable, that any attempt to convey poetry in another language is doomed to failure. [...] We defend translatability — the possibility of translating from any language into any other. Translatability is comparable to the possibility of communication between the peoples. This is the basis of world culture. This is one of the prerequisites of its development. (ANTOKOL'SKIY 1956, in AZOV 2013: 14)

Working in the other direction, Edmond Cary (1957, 1959) took it upon himself to let the West know about the Soviet discussions of translation, particularly the confrontations between linguistic and literary approaches in the 1950s, and his mediation was received with some pride on the Soviet side (see ANTOKOL'SKIY 1959: 451-458).

So there was at least basic mutual awareness of what was going on. The moment at which the new, broader concept of equivalence moved from West to East is nevertheless possible to date with some precision, at least with respect to mainstream translation theory (of the kind used to train translators, for example). Here we have to follow the blows year by year.

In 1973, Vilen Komissarov's *Slovo o Perevode* [A word on translation] offered a mode of equivalence that worked on five levels of content:

1) the level of the linguistic sign, 2) the level of expression, 3) the level of the message, 4) the level of description of the situation, 5) the level of the communication objective. [...] Units of the original and the translation can be equivalent to each other on all five levels or on only some of them. The ultimate goal of translation is to establish the maximum degree of equivalence on each level. (KOMISSAROV 1973: 76; trans. Nune Ayvazyan)

Those five levels clearly extended equivalence well beyond the narrow one-to-one phrase-based sense it had previously enjoyed in the Soviet tradition, and they are strongly reminiscent of Catford's concept of "rank-bound equivalence" (Catford is indeed cited in Komissarov's text).

Also in 1973, Shveitser's *Perevod i lingvistika* [Translation and linguistics] cites several non-Russian theorists of equivalence, including Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Catford (1965), Kade (1968) and Nida (1969), with the last-mentioned leading to examples of linguistic transformations and references to Chomsky (Shveitser 1973: 34-35). As in Komissarov (1973), one senses the development of an international discipline here. Yet Shveitser's term for the space of "equivalence", as in Fedorov (1953) and indeed on a general level in Kade (1968), is *sootvetsvie*, correspondence (*Entsprechung* in Kade). Elements of transformationalism had been adopted, but not any fundamentally new usage of "equivalence".

In 1974, Retsker's *Teoriya perevoda i perevodcheskaya praktika* [The theory of translation and translation practice] puts forward three categories of correspondence: 1) equivalence, 2) variant and contextual correspondence, and 3) all types of translation transformations. This categorization implicitly returns equivalence to its traditional Soviet sense as one-to-one correspondence. However, Retsker now admits that there are two ways of understanding equivalence: the narrow kind is "translation equivalence that does not depend on the context" ([1974]/2007: 13), while the wider kind concerns functions in contexts. A footnote then indicates that Retsker did not think much of the

second, wider concept, and he defends *narrow* equivalents as "kinds of catalysts in the process of translation. Their role can hardly be overestimated" (1974/2007: 13).

The next year, in 1975, Barkhudarov's *Yazyk i perevod* [Language and translation] uses the Latin-derived term *ekvivalent* in precisely the wider sense that Retsker had criticized, elevating it to textual level in most cases, along with a reference to Catford (Barkhudarov 1975: 13). Barkhudarov then defines translation in terms of "invariance", which could be operative on any level at all:

The purpose of the linguistic theory of translation is the scientific description of the process of translation as an interlingual transformation, that is, the transformation of a text in one language into an equivalent text in another language. [...] What makes us consider a translated text equivalent to its original? [...] When a text in the start language is substituted by a text in the target language, there has to remain a certain invariant. The degree of the preservation of this invariant determines the degree of equivalence of the target text to the start text. (BARKHUDAROV 1975: 6-9; trans. Nune Ayvazyan)

The key features of this definition, which is at the same time a mission statement for Translation Studies, are not just the use of "equivalence" as a general relation on many levels, but also the *attainment* of equivalence through a second term, "transformation". This clearly distinguishes the new usage from the previous one, found for example back in Smirnov (1934), where "equivalence" was the *opposite* of "substitution" (which in turn would be the logical result of transformation). Instead of two opposed categories, now we have a process (transformation) leading to a result (equivalence).

In 1978, Vilen Komissarov edited a volume of Western translation theory in Russian translation. The volume includes an intelligent selection of texts, from Jakobson through to Reiss, and is carefully divided into sections, one of which is actually on equivalence. There are translated excerpts from Vinay & Darbelnet ([1958]/1972) and Nida (1964), where the word "equivalence" plays various roles. When rendering Nida's dynamic vs. formal equivalence, the Russian terms are "dinamicheskaya ekvivalentnost'" and "formal'naya ekvivalentnost'" (KOMISSAROV ed. 1978: 126-127), whereas for Vinay & Darbelnet's *équivalence*, which refers to total transformation as in the case of corresponding idioms, the Russian is *ekvivalentsiya* (KOMISSAROV ed. 1978: 164). As Komissarov indicates in his foreword (KOMISSAROV ed. 1978: 13), this latter term should not be confused with *ekvivalentnost'*, that is, with equivalence as used elsewhere. Komissarov actually admits that the translation of Vinay and Darbelnet's *équivalence* is unfortunate, but at least it indicates that something different is at work. In their general more use of *ekvivalentnost'*, though, these translations appear to cement into place the Western sense of equivalence as something resulting from transformation, and point to some of the key texts that this sense was coming from.

Once this new sense of "equivalence" was in place, it obviously risked becoming synonymous with the previous terms that described a good translation, particularly the synthetic concept "adequacy". As in good systems theory, we then find attempts to nudge "adequacy" in a slightly new direction. In 1988, Shveitser's *Teoriya perevoda: Status, problemy, aspekty* [Theory of translation: Status, issues, aspects] argues that the new sense of "equivalence" is clearly *opposed* to "adequacy", which now refers to a translation that is adequate to the *target-side purpose*. Shveitser, though, seems not to enlist any previous Russian definition in his argument, since the classical Russian usages of "adequacy" primarily implied adequacy to the start text, as far as we can tell

("purpose" was indeed mentioned in the 1950s, but not in definitions of "adequacy"). Shveitser's new usage of the term instead follows precisely the same opposition presented in REISS & VERMEER (1984), where we read, for example, that when a text type is altered "it is not equivalence [*Äquivalenz*] that dominates the relation between the target and the start text, but adequacy [*Adäquatheit*] to the goal the translator has sought" (1984: 138, trans. Anthony Pym). The classical Russian term "adequacy" was thus revamped by the perspectives of *Skopos* theory. Whether this new sense of "adequacy" then became dominant is hard to determine, given that re-editions of Fedorov (1953), and other classical texts, have kept the older sense in circulation at the same time.

[A] So why?

So why was the transformational sense of equivalence adopted? The shift clearly happened in the mid 1970s, *prior* to anything that could be drawn from *Skopos* theory, so causation is not to be sought there. The association with the term "transformation" should provide a better clue. Transformational linguistics had been around since the 1950s (HARRIS 1951; CHOMSKY 2002[2]) and had been funded in the United States because of its promised link with machine translation. The early discourse on machine translation, both West and East, did indeed use the term "equivalence", with a surprising number of theoretical texts being translated between English and Russian. That is, prior to the change in mainstream translation theory, there had been a slightly different kind of technical conversation going on.

   If we look at the early papers in machine translation, there are several different usages of the term "equivalence". One of them, found both East and West, refers to equivalence between grammatical categories (for example, ROZENTSVEYG 1959: 98; BAR-HILLEL 1962: 4-5), which was a key technical problem and a usage that can also be found as far back as in Bally ([1909]/1951: 1.30, 96). That is what Catford later termed "formal correspondence" (not to be confused with Nida's concept of the same name), thus apparently ensuring that this particular kind of equivalence would not enter mainstream translation theory – as if things were not complicated enough without ~~out~~it! Another sense, rather looser in usage, is the general reference to the plurality of acceptable translations, as in "a unit in the source language may have more than one possible *equivalent* in the target language" (DOSTERT 1957: 4, our emphasis). This general sense seems to carry no defining criteria other than the fact that people accept it as a translation (a loose assumption that can also be read into Vinay & Darbelnet and Catford, as well as many of the early theorists of machine translation). In the Russian texts from the same years, however, "equivalence" seems to be working in a rather narrower sense. Panov's *Avtomaticheskiy Perevod* [Automatic Translation] (1958: 34) refers to "tsifrovye ekvivalenty" to denote numbers that encode a language item, a concept that is rendered as "digital equivalents" in English translation (PANOV 1960). Similarly, Mel'chuk (1959) proposed an intermediate language based on "translation equivalents" at the lexical and morphological levels, running parallel to "syntactic correspondences" and thus apparently not strongly transformational in themselves. This more restricted sense seems confirmed in Mel'chuk (1963: 59), where we read that "the removal of multivalence is the choice of the necessary equivalent". One thus suspects that the Russians were still attached to a more one-to-one sense of equivalence, at least in the initial years. More tellingly, though, these early machine-translation texts (at least the ones we have been able to consult) do *not* use "adequacy" as a theoretical term, and this absence of a rival would seem to have allowed the sense of "equivalence" to

expand. Not surprisingly, in *Avtomaticheskiy perevod* (Automatic translation) (KULAGINA & MEL'CHUK 1971: 50, 240), a collection of Western papers translated into Russian, we find frequent reference to equivalents of the transformational, one-to-many kind. Pending more detailed research, we thus suspect that, from the initial soup of different meanings, the general machine-translation discourse drifted towards a transformational kind of equivalence, albeit not as a key technical term.

Mainstream Soviet translation theory seems not to refer much to the early theorists of machine translation, neither East nor West, prior to Revzin and Rozentsveyg's *Osnovy obshchego i mashinnogo perevoda* [Fundamentals of general and machine translation] of 1964, whose title suggests that machine translation should be incorporated into a general approach to all translation. On both sides of the Cold War, the allure of machine translation had certainly provided strong motivation: the initial projects had, after all, been for work from German to English and German to Russian, coinciding with the transfer of rocket technology. Yet there was no immediate transfer to mainstream theory. Indeed, as we have seen, there was a considerable delay: the international discourse on machine translation was operative from the late 1950s, whereas the transformational sense of equivalence only entered mainstream Soviet theories in the mid 1970s. ~~And~~ Catford had been published in 1965, but prior to that Shaumyan publishe~~ds~~ a number of works on generative grammar (Shaumyan 1963a, 1963b, 1965). More specifically, Shaumyan dedicate~~ds~~ a whole chapter to machine translation and its relation to structural linguistics in his *Strukturnaya Lingvistika* [Structural linguistics] (1965), ~~–~~almost a full decade prior to the appearance of the transformational sense of equivalence in Russian. Why the gap?

A little history might explain. In the United States, research on machine translation became dormant following the ALPAC report of 1966, which notoriously declared that "there is no immediate or predictable prospect of useful machine translation" (1966: 32). By the mid 1970s, though, there had been a cautious return to machine translation: weather forecasts were being translated automatically between English and French in Canada, the Systran system was in use by the US Air Force and, from 1976, the Commission of the European Communities was also investing in Systran (see HUTCHINS 2006). Perhaps not by chance, this was the moment when the transformational use of equivalence surfaced in mainstream Soviet theory. The term was certainly not entering as the latest novelty.

There were undoubtedly other reasons at work as well. The mid 1970s saw a relative thaw in Cold War relations, symbolized by the first international docking in space between Apollo 18 and Soyuz 19 in 1975. That was precisely the year in which we find the first unequivocal docking of a piece of Western translation theory with the mainstream Soviet tradition.

We can only speculate on the specific motivations of the individual scholars (there is always more to discover). On the general level, though, there can be little doubt that the shift in terminology occurred in the mid 1970s and that the dates correspond to a similar shift in international relations.

[A] Conclusion

Our account has followed the avatars of two different senses of the term "equivalence". The restricted sense, associated with one-to-one correspondence, remained fairly constant in Soviet translation theories through to the mid 1970s, although the term was occasionally challenged because of its non-Slavic morphology. The wider sense, where equivalence can be the result of transformation on many levels, entered mainstream

Soviet discourse in the mid1970s, at a time when machine translation was of some interest and there were warmer relations between East and West.

Why should this shift in just one term be of interest? A speculative argument might run as follows: If you elevate equivalence to the goal of all translation and make it the measure by which translations are judged, you thereby marginalize or at least partly conceal much of the previous Soviet discourse, notably the insistence on "adequacy" (as a synthetic translational monotheism), the previous discourses on exactitude and accuracy, and the various categorizations of translation solutions that had developed over time within the frame of those terms. You also implicitly put Translation Studies on a positivistic path, separated from the epistemological skepticism and probabilistic empiricism that characterized most twentieth-century scientific thought. Along the way, considerable confusion is created. The docking operation may have been successful in the short term, but it should not be seen as necessary progress.

There are a hundred petty nationalisms operative in translation theory: every tradition invented its most valuable concepts first; every nation deserves better international recognition of its contribution. In the case of the Soviet tradition, there are certainly grounds to complain, as did Shveitser in his *Perevod i lingvistika* (1973: 16-17), that the Soviet creation of "a general linguistic theory of translation" had been (and continues to be) unjustly ignored by foreign writers. And from that perspective, one might lament, along with Shveitser and Retsker, that the tradition was then willfully perturbed by importing a new term from outside. Either way, the complaints remain fairly superficial. Surely the more profound concern must be whether this new sense of equivalence was in any way a step forward? What problems did it solve? What alternative answers did it obfuscate? As we move into more hermeneutic, sociological and political approaches to translation, as we generally abandon the linguistic projects altogether, the answers to those questions will tend not to be nationalistic.

Finally, the questioning of the national frame should not just look at the endgames, as if there were definite terms to be reached, with winners and losers along the way. We would also like to know a lot more about the *beginnings* of traditions, about the ways groups of scholars and translators started to think about translation. We have presented the now customary narrative of the Vsemirnaya literatura project, which led to the various guidelines, which in turn led to Soviet theoretical discourses. That mono-causal narrative, falsely *sui generis* (as if there had not been similar translation projects, albeit of lesser dimensions, in English, French and German in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and as if there had been no theoretical input from Russian Formalism and its concern with literary history), is not just homogenizing but also precludes questions about cross-cultural thought in the incipit of the exercise, as if a group of translators and administrators woke up one morning, looked at the books waiting to be translated, and were immediately illuminated by theoretical concepts. We note that at least two senses of equivalence could be found in Bally's comparative stylistics at least from 1909, and very probably elsewhere. One would not be too surprised to find, with a little digging around, that the work of Russian translators and theorists in the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the field of stylistics, borrowed more international ideas than is nationalistically acknowledged, and that the transnational work on shared problems actually occurred well before the disputed docking of equivalence in the mid 1970s.

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