

Nida and Taber: formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Nida and Taber: Formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence Nida argued that there are two different types of equivalence, namely formal equivalence — which in the second edition by Nida and Taber (1982) is referred to as formal correspondence —and dynamic equivalence. Formal correspondence 'focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content', unlike dynamic equivalence which is based upon 'the principle of equivalent effect' (1964: 159). In the second edition (1982) of their work, the two theorists provide a more detailed explanation of each type of equivalence.

Formal correspondence consists of a TL item which represents the closest equivalent of a SL word or phrase. Nida and Taber make it clear that there are not always formal equivalents between language pairs. They therefore suggest that these formal equivalents should be used wherever possible if the translation aims at achieving formal rather than dynamic equivalence. The use of formal equivalents might at times have serious implications in the TT since the translation will not be easily understood by the target audience (Fawcett, 1997).

Nida and Taber themselves assert that 'Typically, formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard' (ibid. : 201). Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the

same impact on the TC audience as the original wording did upon the ST audience.

They argue that 'Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful' (Nida and Taber, 1982: 200). One can easily see that Nida is in favour of the application of dynamic equivalence, as a more effective translation procedure. This is perfectly understandable if we take into account the context of the situation in which Nida was dealing with the translation phenomenon, that is to say, his translation of the Bible.

Thus, the product of the translation process, that is the text in the TL, must have the same impact on the different readers it was addressing. Only in Nida and Taber's edition is it clearly stated that 'dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information' (ibid: 25). Despite using a linguistic approach to translation, Nida is much more interested in the message of the text or, in other words, in its semantic quality. He therefore strives to make sure that this message remains clear in the target text.