

Dynamic Equivalence in an ASL Interpretation

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What is Dynamic Equivalence?

- A translation that is idiomatic, makes every effort to communicate the meaning in the source text in the natural form of the receptor language. (Larson, 1984)
- A translation that aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture. (Nida, 1964)



What is Not Dynamically Equivalent

- Translations that are not based on the overall concept of a text, example: literal translation.
- Translations that do not match the goal of the source text.
- Translations that evoke emotions in target users that differ from the emotions evoked in source language users.

The Question

- If a person fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) views a dynamically equivalent translation of a song, would they experience similar emotions and memories that non ASL users experience when listening to the same song?

Method

- Data was collected by researching ten subjects.
- Eight of the subjects viewed two dynamically equivalent translations, while the other two Only listened to the two songs.
- Four of the subjects were Deaf, more specifically ASL monolinguals.
- Four of the subjects were not deaf (hearing) and fluent in ASL.
- Two of the subjects were hearing and not fluent in ASL.

- The "ASL" subjects viewed both song translations, two of the hearing people from this group watched the songs with sound while the other two watched them without sound.
- The two non ASL users only listened to the songs and did not view the translations.
- Afterwards all the subjects were interviewed to discuss any emotions or memories they experienced while viewing the data.

Results

- When viewing the first song all the the subjects exhibited signs of being relaxed and they all smiled at some point.
- A majority of the hearing subjects experienced memories of fishing.
- The second song exhibited a clear difference in reaction, the ASL hearing subjects found it humorous and experienced memories of infidelity, while the two non ASL hearing subjects did not find it humorous and experienced different memories all together.

- The Deaf subjects did not reveal any information during the interview process, however one subject said they felt happy for the first song and angry for the second song.
- The Deaf subjects did exhibit a lot of facial features that were similar to the hearing subjects, relaxed face, smiling, tense face, fixed eye gaze.
- The reaction to the second songs theme of infidelity created tense facial expressions and they did not find it as humorous as the Hearing ASL subjects found it.

Discussion

- When the subjects showed interest in the songs they displayed a fixed eye gaze.
- When the subjects showed little or no interest in the song their eye gaze was not fixed and ended up multitasking in order to keep their attention.
- When the goal of a song is clear it is easier to create a dynamically equivalent translation.
- It can be difficult to translate ambiguity.

Conclusion

- When a song translation uses ASL poetry or storytelling techniques the implicit nature of music can more effectively be translated.
- The goal of these translations were to mirror how hearing people listen to music recreationally.
- Would the translation change if the setting were at a concert venue?
- What would change about the translations if the setting were actors signing songs in a musical and they were dancing?
- Thinking outside the box is the first step towards dynamic equivalence.