

## 39.

### Issues In Finding Lexical Equivalence: Some Strategies And Guidelines

**Rajini Reddy Kotla**

CALTS, University of Hyderabad,  
Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana – 500046  
rajini.kotla@gmail.com

**Abstract:**

*Presence of differences or divergences among languages make the task of translation difficult. It is often observed that coping up with the difficulty at structural level is more easy than at lexical level. As no two languages are similar in all respects and more over the presence of lexical mis-matches i.e., the concepts and expressions present in one language may or may not present in another language the task of finding lexical equivalence becomes hard and sometimes impossible. Many times the translator end up by giving near equivalents and fail to transfer the exact information present in the source language lexical item. Sometimes, this may lead to mis-communication. The only way to come out of the situations like this is opting other means of giving equivalence. This paper provides details of the areas where giving lexical equivalence is not possible and propose other means of giving lexical equivalence so that no information of the source language lexical item is lost when translated.*

**1.0 Introduction:**

The term 'lexical equivalence' is ideally defined as 'equivalence at the lexical level'. As Zgusta (1971) defines: "Equivalents are those lexical units of the target language which have the identical lexical meaning as that of the lexical units of the source language". But no two languages are similar in all respects (i.e., on the grounds of linguistics, culture as well as social stratification). Hence, the task of finding equivalents tends to be difficult. Even if we find some, most of them are not absolute but they are only partial equivalents. As Eugene A. Nida (1947) says, "no corresponding two words in two different languages ever have identically the same meaning. The problem is not one of finding absolute equivalents, but of finding relatively close equivalents". This paper explores mainly the issues involved in finding lexical equivalence and would list down the usual methods or strategies to overcome the issues and also proposes a method to give exact information present in the source language lexical item.

The aim of this paper is to enumerate and elucidate the areas wherein giving lexical equivalence is problematic, by providing examples (from the languages such as Telugu, Hindi and English) and to shed light on the usual methods that are in use to give equivalence and also furnish details on how to give explanatory equivalent. This paper also try to provide certain guide lines to lexicographers and translators while dealing with proper nouns, abbreviations and false friends.

**1.1 Types of equivalents:**

There are mainly two types of equivalents namely, translational or substitutable equivalents and explanatory or descriptive equivalents. The first type of equivalents are chosen in order to replace the source language (henceforth, SL) words directly in the target language (henceforth, TL), whereas the second type of equivalents are chosen only to give additional information regarding the word and this type of equivalents are directly not replaceable in the TL. Generally the second type of equivalents are given where no lexical equivalent is possible. The tendency to provide explanatory or descriptive equivalents is often observed in case of the words pertaining to culture and onomasiological gaps (missing expressions or concepts).

**1.2 Usual methods of giving equivalence:**

Generally equivalents are expected to be directly replaceable in the TL. But due to presence of the lexical mis-matches and differences among languages, finding these type of equivalents is not always possible. We can see these mis-matches or differences among languages in the following circumstances:

- 1- When the languages in question are not related, though their cultures are closely parallel like for example:  
Telugu - Hindi
- 2- When both the language as well as the culture of the speakers of these languages are not related namely languages such as English - Telugu.

In circumstances shown above, the translator or lexicographer has three options i. e., borrowing from SL (as it is /

nativized) or coining a new word (neologism) or giving an explanatory equivalent (minimal). See the following examples.

### 1.2.1 Borrowing (as it is)

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
upmā	upmā
ugādi	yugādi

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
ampere	āMpiyar
bongo	bāMgo
bull dog	buldāg
kimono	kimano

### 1.2.2 Borrowing (nativized)

Example:

Telugu word	Gloss	Hindi equivalent	Gloss
(nāra) cīra	saree	cīra	clothing
malludu	wrestler	māla	wrestler
addamu	obstacle, hindrance	āda, adacana	obstacle, hindrance, obstruction

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalents
Duke	ḍyūku
police	polīsu
cheque	cekku
pistol	pistōlu
coat	kōṭu

### 1.2.3 Neologism

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
talaMṭu	aBayaMga_snāna/taila_snāna

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
jet liner	jeṭ vimānaM
forget-me-nots	maitri pratīka pū mokkalu

### 1.2.4 Explanatory

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
hōru	garjana {samudra ādi kī}
repu	kala{ānevālā}
wammudu	{Coṭā}Bāi

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
nugget	{Kanijapu}mudda
flap jack	{rāgulato cesina} kēku
avant garde	{kaḷākārulaina} mArgadarśakulu

Just because directly insertible equivalents are desirable for translational purposes, it is not advisable in all the cases to go for borrowing or neologism. The equivalents obtained by these two methods may not be stabilized in the language and may require some time to become stabilized. For this reason, it is always better to give equivalents with some minimal explanations. This minimal explanations if necessary can be given in curly brackets which represent redundant information, so that this particular information can be directly dropped in the later stages of translation. For example:

Telugu word	Gloss	Corresponding Hindi word
1. ninna	yesterday	kala{bītā_huā}
2. paMḍu	fruit	Pala{pakā_huā}
3. anna	elder brother	{baḍā}Bāī
4. oMṭeddubaMḍi	bullock-cart	bailagāḍī{eka_baila_vālī}

As one may see, the equivalents given under the third column are exact equivalents to the words in Telugu and their corresponding glosses in English. However, these Hindi correspondences are certainly short of being lexical since the lexical equivalents outside the braces are supported by the additional material given in the braces. For native speakers of Hindi they may be read as unnecessary 'noise' in the text. But in order to know what exactly is said in the SL one may opt this method of giving equivalence. By opting this method there would not be any room for miscommunication.

### 1.3 AREAS WHERE EXPLANATORY EQUIVALENTS BECOME NECESSARY

As pointed out earlier, explanatory equivalents are given only when there is no possibility to provide lexical equivalence. The following are the areas where explanatory equivalents become necessary.

#### 1.3.1 Culture-bound Words

Words which denote concepts or objects that are specific or part of one specific language community can be called as culture-bound words. As Lyons (1968) says: "the language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture, and the lexical distinctions drawn by each language will tend to reflect the culturally important features of objects, institutions and activities in the society in which the language operates". Speaking about the words pertaining to culture, Nida (1947) classified the areas of culture under six headings, namely:

1. Terms for man's form, i. e. physical form (anatomy), his psychology and his diseases (pathology).
2. Terms for features of natural environment, i. e. physical features of the universe, the seasons, fauna (animal life), and flora (plant life).
3. Terms for feature of material culture, i. e. buildings, clothing, food, artifacts, and measurements.
4. Terms for features of social culture, i. e. political systems, property, laws, war, family, class distinctions and occupations,
5. Terms for features of religious culture, i. e. Gods, spirits, divine sanctions, revelation and rites, and
6. Linguistic features, i. e. sounds, the words, the combinations of words and the meanings of words.

Here is a small list of examples under each category extracted from both the machine readable dictionaries(henceforth, MRD).

##### 1.3.1.1 Terms for man's form

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
paMḍlukoruku	dāzta pīsa{gusse meM}
pusi	cīpaḍa{āṁKa kā kīcaḍa}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
adenoids	[eḍināyiḍ]_graMTulu
caries	[daMta/salya]_kṣayaM

### 1.3.1.2 Natural environment

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
toṭakūra	toṭakūra{eka sāga}
kāya	Pala{kaccā}
wāMdra ceṭṭu	baheṛā{eka jaMgali peḍa}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
albatross	ālbeṭrās{samudra pakṣi}
anglers	{cēpalani tine}cēpalu
bitch	[āḍa]_kukka
blenheim	1. {oka jāti}kukka/ 2. {baMgāru cāyagala}āpil paMḍu
cotswold	koṭsvold{gorre_jāti}
ewe	[āḍa]_gorre
budgerigar	ciluka jāti pakṣi {āstreliyāku ceMḍina}
kiwi	1. nyūjilāMḍu_deṣṭiyuḍu/2.kivī_[pakṣi]
koala	kaulā{āstreliyā jaMtuvu}
kohlrabi	{oka rakaM}kyābejī
kumquat	{cinna}nāriMja
bream	{oka rakaM}cēpa

### 1.3.1.3 Material culture

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
maNugu	parimāNa{cālisa sera kā}
jaMtika	seva{namakīna}
kūḍu	cāvala{pakā huā}
kalagūra	miśrita sabjī{tarakāriyoM kā}
kuMcaM	parimāNa{cāra sera kā māpa}
gāre	vadā{eka prakāra kā}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
additives	{āhāra padārtālalo vēsē}raMgu
alb	{carc Pādarulu DariMcē}tella dustulu
anorak	[ṭopī gala]_cinna koṭu
bathymetric	lotu māpaka saMbaMDamaina{samudraM modalaina vāṭi}

kimono	kimono{jāpānu strīla dustulu}
batter	{kalipina}piMḍi
croisant	{nelavaMka_ākāra}kēkulu
fats	kovvu_[padārTālu]
cell	[jailu]_gadi
chablis	{tella drākṣā}sārāyi
lanolin	{gorre bocculōni}kovvu

### 1.3.1.4 Social culture

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
raccabaMḍa	caupāla{paMcoM ke baiṬane kā sTāna}
sānapetṭuvādu	sikalīgara{ teja karanevālā}
kākapīlukaM	kulaka{śilpiyoM kā muKiyā}
kamma	1.karNa Pūla/2.kamma{eka jāti}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
disenfranchise	[vōṭu hakku]_lēkuMḍā_cēyu
knighthood	yodDa_[birudu praDānaM]
jock	{skāṭlyāMḍu}sainikuḍu
abstention	[vōṭuku]_dūraMgā_uMḍaḍaM
attorney general	[praButva]_praDāna nyāyavādi
khan	Kān{pālakula birudu}

### 1.3.1.5 Religious culture

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
vaḍapappu	mūṁga xāla{se banā prasāxa}
paMganāmaM	tripuMḍa{wilaka-mūlataH tīna āḍī vālā}
porludaMḍaM	praNāma{luḍakate hue karanā}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
anointing	{matapara ācāraMgā} talaMṭu
apostolic	- {apostala}pracāra_saMbaMDi

### 1.3.1.6 Linguistic features

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
pratyayaM	pratyaya{vyākaraNa}
karma	- karma{vyākaraNa}
kartā	- kartā{vyākaraNa}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
anogram	varNakrama mārpū{padaMlo}

### 1.3.2 Onomasiological Gaps

The onomasiological gaps involve the lacking of designative lexical units of the TL. Usually these gaps are filled either by borrowing from SL or new innovations of any kind. As mentioned earlier, equivalents given using these two methods are new in TL, hence they require some kind of explanation. See the following examples.

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
pāleru	naukara{sāJe para KetoM meM kāma karanevālā}
haḍapaM	baṭuā{pāna aura supārī raKane kī Coṭī tailī}
jōkoṭṭu	sulā{tapakī dekara}
vāsena	kapaḍā{jisase - Gaḍe yā jādi kā munḥa bāMDā jātā hai}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
fatality	1.[pramādavaśattu jarige]_maraNaM/2.vīramaraNaM
recap	[muKyāMśālu]_saMkṣipwaMgā ceppu
trailer	1.āśrita baMḍi/2.trelar{sinimā}
sleazy	[palacani]_neta
nosedive	1.vimānaM digāḍaM
recharging	[maḷī]_cārj ceyaḍaM
hoax	- mosaM[parihāsāniki]_cesinadi
braise	uḍikiMcina{sannani maMṭapai}
josh	ēḍipiMcu{parihāsāniki}
disembark	[oḍa/vimānaM/railu]_nuMḍi digu
air sick	anārogyaM pālaina{vimāna prayāNaM valana}

### 1.3.3 Absence of Denotatum in the Concepts:

Similar to designatum, the denotatum which is present in one language community may be missing in other language communities. In such circumstances, many times explanatory equivalents become necessary in many cases. See the following examples.

Example:

Telugu word	- Hindi equivalent
ponaka	eka ṭōkarā{jaMgalī Kajūra kī tīliyoM kā}
viMṭibadda	kamāna{Danuṣa kī}
rubbuḍu potraM	eka golā patTara{jisa se gīlī cījeM pīsī jāwī hai}

Example:

English word	- Telugu equivalent
cymbals	siMballu/pedda tāḷalu{saMgīta}
americana	{amerikā saMbaMDita}vastuvulu

bleachers	[ārubayalu]_kurcī ballalu
bongo	bāMgo{vāyidyāM}
barbell	bārbel{veyiṭliPṭiMglo ette BāraM}
accordion	akārdiyan{oka saMgīta sādānaM}

### 1.3.4 Onomatopoeic Words

Onomatopoeic words involve a combination of sounds that resemble or suggest what the word refers to. The phonetic forms of these expressions have comparable associative characteristics of their meaning and are often language specific. These words are often untranslatable and hence require an explanatory equivalent. See the following examples:

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
paṭapaṭa	kaṭakaṭa{dāmītoM ke caṭaKane kī Dvani}
sala sala	- pāni ubalane kī Dvani
horu	garjana Dvani{samudra ādi kī lagātāra}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
ahem	{goMtu savariMcukonu}Dvani
swish	ṣ...{aMṭū visuru}

### 1.3.5 Miscellaneous Reasons

The following are the other areas where explanatory equivalents are needed.

#### 1.3.5.1 Machinery and vehicles

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
oMṭeddubāMḍi	bailagāḍī{eka baila vālī}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
jet liner	jet_[vimānaM]
juggernaut	[pedda]_vāhanaM

#### 1.3.5.2 Entertainment

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
vāmanaguMṭalu	vāmanaguMṭalu{eka Kela}
piMpiḷlu	eka Kela{tū tū Dvani karate hue laḍakiyoM kā eka Kela}

Example:

English word	Telugu word
Bolero	bolēro{nr̥tyaM/saMgītaM}
Jazz	jāj{saMgītaM}

### 1.3.5.3 Metaphoric/idiomatic expressions

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
velagabeṭṭu	kara{vyaMgya}
paḍi cāvu	gira{tiraskāra}
navvipo	ham̥sa paḍa{vyaMgya}
murigicāvu	sa.Da_jā{wiraskāra}
koMpa	Gara{nicārTaka}

### 1.3.5.4 To specify ambiguity

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
sigapūlu	Pūla{jūde meM lagāye jānevāle}
paśuvulagaMṭa	GaMṭī{paśū ādi ke gale kī}
aMṭu	kalama{paude kā}
potu	nara{paśū kā}
soku	saMkramita ho{roga}
maMḍe	rāśi{Pasala kī bāloM kī}
monna	parasoM{bitā huā}
nikkapoḍuvu	Kaḍe kara{kāna ādi}
paMgaṭiMcu	dūra raKa{paira}

### 1.3.5.5 Historically relevant events and names

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
tenugu	tenugu[telugu kā prācīna nama}
nalakūbaruḍu	nalakūbara{jo apnī suMdaratā ke lie atyanta prasidDa hai}
hariścaMdruḍu	rājā hariścandra{jo apne satyavrata ke lie bahuta hī prasidDa huā Tā}

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
bastile day	bāstail ḍe{PreMc deśīyula selavu dinaM}

### 1.3.5.6 Kinship terms

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
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anna	[ba.Dā]_Bāi
tammuḍu	[Coṭā]_Bāi

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
cousin	tallidaMḍrula tobuṭṭuvula saMtati
uncle	tallidaMḍrula sodaruḍu
aunt	tallidaMḍrula sahodari

### 1.3.5.7 To specify gender, number and person(gnp)

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
telivainavāḍu	samaJadāra {pulliMga}
telivainadi	samaJadāra {strIliMga}
saByuḍu	sadasya {pulliMga}
okkokkaḍu	eka eka {pulliMga}
okkokkaru	eka eka {loga}
iMkoVkaḍu	aura eka {pulliMga, eka vacana}
iMdaraM	itane loga {1. bahuvacana}
ivi	ye {bahuvacana}
idi	yaha {strIliMga}

### 1.3.5.8 Awards and honours

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi equivalent
kalāprapūrNa	kalāprapūrNa {upāDi}
gaMḍapeMḍeraM	gaMḍapeMḍeraM {eka vijaya sūcaka ka.Dā jise kalākāra ya kavī apne paira meM DāraNa karate haiM}

### 1.3.5.9 Signs and symbols

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
ampersand	āMparseMḍu {saMketaM}

## 2.0 ENCYCLOPAEDIC EQUIVALENT

The main purpose of the explanation given in the brackets of an explanatory equivalent is to provide exact information of the SL word. The explanation provided in the brackets should be such that, it should present the exact information that is present in the SL word. But it should not give unnecessary redundant information. If we look at Grice's Maxims of Conversation (Grice, 1975), this point becomes very clear. According to Gricean maxims, four conversational maxims arise from the pragmatics of natural language. They are:

### 1. Maxim of Quality: Truth

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

### 2. Maxim of Quantity: Information

Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

### 3. Maxim of Relation: Relevance

Be relevant

### 4. Maxim of Manner: Clarity

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

These maxims are framed as directives to the speaker and can collectively be expressed by the imperative “Don’t say too much and don’t say too little”. Considering these maxims the point to be borne in mind is that while giving explanatory equivalent the information provided as explanation of the word should always be minimal and not encyclopedic in nature. If detailed encyclopedic information is given, the entry would appear cumbersome, especially in the MRDs as well as in the out-put produced by the Machine Translation (henceforth, MT) system. Moreover, the MT system will exhibit its inability to handle such entries. See the following examples of explanatory equivalents supplied as encyclopedic entries.

Example:

Telugu word	Hindi encyclopaedic equivalent	- Lexical equivalent
ṣaḍaiśvaryaṃ	Caha prakāra ke aiśvarya 1.mahātmya/2.Dairya/ 3.kīrti/4.saMpadā/5.jFāna/6.vairAgya	ṣaḍaiśvarya
ṣabdālaMkāraM	ṣabxa para āDārīta alaMkāra, ina alaMkāroM meM ṣabdoM ke kāraNa camatkāra hotā hai, ina meM muKya alaMkāra ye haiM – 1.anuprāsa/ 2.yamaka/ 3.punarukti/4.punaruktavādāBāsa/ 5.vīpsā/6.vakrokti/7.śleṣa	ṣabdālaMkāra
aDolokamulu	jamīna ke nīce sTita sāta loka– 1.atala/2.vitala/3.sutala/ 4.talātala/5.mahātala/ 6.rasātala/7.pātāla	aDoloka
ṣaḍṛtuvulu	Caha prakāra kī ṛtueM mānī jāṭī hai- 1.vasaMta/ 2. grīṣma/3.varṣā/ 4.śarad/5.hemaMta/6.śīśira	Caha ṛtu

## 2.1 DEALING with ABBREVIATIONS AND PROPER NOUNS

### 2.1.1 Abbreviations

Abbreviations are frequently used expressions or forms in English. Therefore, while dealing with abbreviations, corresponding TL abbreviated form as well as its full form must be given. If the TL does not use a particular abbreviation it requires that the relevant abbreviation may need to be expanded. See the following examples.

Example:

English word	Telugu equivalent
dss	sa. Ba. vi.{samāja Badrata viBāgaM}
id.	a. ra.{ade racayita}
IMF	aM. dra. ni.{aMtarjātīya dravya saMbaMDi niDi}
in	aM.{aMgulālu}
rd.	ro.{roḍḍu}
RE	ma. vi.{mata vidya}
am	u.{udayaM}
pm	sā./rā.{sāyaMtraM/rātri}

### 2.1.2 Proper Nouns

As pointed out earlier generally proper nouns are not listed in the dictionary but if they are of historical importance or culturally relevant they are incorporated in the dictionary. In order to give equivalence to the proper noun, the most preferred method is to borrow the term from SL as it is and give a small indication stating its status. See the following examples.

Example:

Telugu word	- Hindi equivalent
addaMki	- addaMki{eka gāMva kā nāma}
karNāṭaka	- karnāṭaka{xeśa}
baMdaru	- baMdaru/maCalīpaṭṭaNaM{eka śāhara kā nāma}

In some languages probably due to pronunciation complexities or lack of sounds, proper nouns are translated into their native languages or adopted as per their language sounds. For this reason, before giving an equivalent to the proper noun, detail study should be done and accordingly the equivalent should be given. See the following examples.

English	Telugu	Hindi
Egypt	ījīptu	misra
Greece	grīs	yūnāna
China	cainā	cīna
Britan	britan	bartāniyā
Europe	airopā	yūropa
Asia	āsiyā	eśiyā
India	Bārata deśaM	Bārata
Delhi	Dillī	xillī
Russia	raṣyā	rūsa

### 2.3 DEALING with 'FALSE FRIENDS'

Although both Telugu and Hindi are from different language families we can trace many words having similar form. These words are especially borrowed words from different language sources such as Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. These words sometimes tend to become 'false friends' i. e., words with very similar form but different meaning. Proper care should be taken while dealing with this sort of words. The best way to deal with such words is to study comparative and contrastive features of words of both these languages. See the following examples.

Example:

Telugu word	Gloss	Hindi word	Gloss
parīśrama	- Industry	parīśrama	Hard work
udyogaM	Job	udyoga	Industry
sattā	Capability	sattā	Power
sīmā	1.Country, 2. Region	sīmā	1.Border, 2.Limit

### 3.0 Conclusions:

The knowledge of the problematic areas of giving lexical equivalence and the strategies is always helpful for any translator or a lexicographer for smooth translation or compilation of a dictionary. The method of giving lexical equivalence with additional information in brackets is also proposed in this paper. The main objective of this proposed method is to see that the no information present in the SL is lost when it is translated, so as to avoid mis-

communication. The strategy of giving minimal explanatory equivalent instead of giving encyclopaedic equivalent is also shown in this paper. Finally, a few guidelines are provided to deal with the proper nouns, abbreviations and false friends. The students of Translation Studies, lexicographers and the aspiring translators would certainly benefit from the insight of this paper.

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