Arguing for cluster equivalence as a model of cross-linguistic equivalence

Ekwiwalencja klasterowa jako propozycja modelu ekwiwalencji międzyjęzykowej

Because of units that are structurally incongruent with one another across different languages, equivalence cannot be reduced to establishing correspondences between word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase substitution proposals (Waliński, 2015). Normally, a closer look at various translations proposed for rendering the meaning of an expression that does not have a readily-available lexical/syntactic equivalent in the target language demonstrates that the equivalent structure emerges as the result of an interaction between the meaning of the linguistic code and the semantic interpretation of discourse in a specific context (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2015). Because translators re-conceptualize the original message to re-construct its meaning in the target language, an equivalent is not a perfect mirror image of the original author’s mental model but an approximation formed through a mental blend of the original conceptual content and the way it is interpreted in the mind of the recipient (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2010).

From a diversity of elements involved in the construction of such approximative equivalents, this paper focuses on two selected factors. One is the key role of construal (Langacker, 2008), which is discussed on the basis of equivalents proposed for the phrase “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk” (Waliński, 2016). The other is the importance of cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2017), which is discussed on the basis of translation proposals for the slogan “I’m lovin’ it”. From the perspective of a wide range of Polish equivalents proposed by various translators, this paper argues for cluster equivalence (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2017) as a replacement for the traditional models of cross-linguistic equivalence. Viewed from this perspective, any inter-linguistic equivalent bears only some resemblance to the original. The equivalence extends within the lower and upper bounds of tolerance thresholds for the semantic difference and holds as long as a particular approximation constitutes an allowable substitution, i.e. is sufficiently similar to the original in a certain specified sense to be eligible for substitution. The paper shows that in real-life scenarios the cluster equivalence can expand surprisingly far to include cases of highly individualized equivalence conditioning.

References