

DOGMATIC EQUIVALENCE: A KEY TO LITURGICAL TRANSLATION?

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The article presents the fundamentals of liturgical translation in search for the core of this partial translation theory. Liturgical texts are known to combine three dimensions of religious discourse: semantics (especially dogmatic exegesis), poetics (the specific poetics of original Hebrew and Greek texts) and performability (covering particular features of aural perception). The history of investigating liturgical translation counts at least a century. Exactly 100 years ago, Ukrainian researcher Ivan Ohiyenko published a seminal paper whose issues and ideas were repeated and reverberated in most further studies which directly and specifically dealt with biblical phrasing cited in the Liturgy, doctrinal correctness and ideological influences, matters of interpretative and temporal retranslations, the problem of the correlation between the poetics of the original languages and that of the target language, relevant sound and music qualities of the text.

Linguistic patterns and theological hermeneutics shape a special type of equivalence which is applicable to texts for liturgical use – dogmatic equivalence, which can be viewed from four perspectives: terminological essence; lexical or cultural orthotheological interpretation; grammatical meaningfulness; phonetic means for theological interpretation and liturgical performability. It is a difficult task to keep a proper balance between the attitude of linguists (who concentrate on relations between a sacred text and a reading community) and that of theologians (who stress on the authoritative status of a sacred text although overlook cultural historicity). Thus, dogmatic equivalence is a structural phenomenon which can be divided into different levels, components or dimensions. The interconnection of translation problems will have to deploy the approved solutions from sci-tech, poetry and literary translation. The revolutionary principle which is to be acknowledged properly is that even liturgical translation can benefit from linguistic experimenting.

Key words: translation theory, liturgical translation, interpretation, equivalence, cultural norms.

*Dedicated with the deepest respect and gratitude
to Ukrainian Warriors*

Say, why have you grown so black,
Field once greenly verdant?
– I have grown so black with blood
For free freedom murdered.

*Taras Shevchenko,
translated by Vera Rich*

Introduction. In the 20th century, the formation of translation studies as an academic discipline and the post-Vatican II liturgical reform prepared ground for accumulating data and shaping a new research area: liturgical translation. It has always been a vibrant domain of religious life in both Western and Eastern Christianity, although a much less amount of academic attention was oriented at it. Historical matters were discussed sporadically; critical publications appeared quite rarely; theoretical understanding evolved recently with a number of insightful papers at the turn of the 21st century. This is the reason why it is so important to trace the fundamentals of liturgical translation, and dogmatically-defined equivalence can be the very core of this partial translation theory.

Previous research in the area. Today's reader has the understanding that liturgical translators deal with twisted tensions appearing between linguistic patterns and liturgical hermeneutics as well as remembering about the stylistic / poetic and musical parameters of the text [4; 7; 14; 30; 32]. Liturgical translation has become part of ecclesiastical law, i.e. its assets and aims are discussed in official churchly documents [19]. Meanwhile, researchers' core focus is on textual transformations and deviations, and less attention is paid to the qualitative metamorphoses of the lexical texture due to the lack of using tools of in-depth linguistic analysis [e.g. 23; 28; 34; cf. 8].

Methodology. The assumptions of this paper are grounded within contemporary views of translation theory in general and religious translation in particular. When it comes to rendering elements of cultural context, the issue of achieving equivalence in the target text deserves prior attention which can be justified and verified by the methods of lexical, etymological, contextual and interpretational analyses. The translation quality assessment of a number of Ukrainian and Polish translation variants is carried out in order to encompass a variety of translation perspectives merging cultural studies, grammar, theology and literary studies.

Results and Discussion. What theory is available, and what is needed? The contemporary culture of publishing religious books in translation does not stipulate the publicity of a translator's contemplations, although the existing sum of knowledge in this domain would greatly benefit from such meditations and shared experience. Rarely do translators dedicate a small part of the preface to translation matters. More rarely do they write about translation principles, but instead, they dwell upon the edition of the original, other translations, the aims of the translation, etc. The translation principles applied are casually mentioned that helps locate the very text in the range of mainstream translation

tendencies but tell almost nothing of translation norms and strategies which can be shared by other translators in the future.

In 1922, Ivan Ohiyenko published his translation of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom where he added a separate part of comments including “Methods of translating liturgical books into Ukrainian” [7]. He formulated the following principles of translation, which reveal the historical and cultural links between the original and translation, and the principles of reproducing stylistic functions and adherence to certain translation strategies, namely:

1) translating from the original, but taking into account the tradition established by the Church Slavonic biblical and liturgical literature (this principle is defined by diverse liturgical practices in various Orthodox Churches, therefore the original is always an ‘amazing’ point in Orthodox translation);

2) paying attention to the specific features of the text, which is sung, uttered or recited quietly (this principle also means the possible use of a different language which is pronounced by a priest but not announced to the public, and this is important for defining the priority of translating texts for official liturgical use);

3) taking into account the Jewish-Hellenistic poetics (biblical and liturgical texts are mostly poetic and poetical, and these features immensely shape the verbal beauty of the Liturgy);

4) avoiding one’s own amplificational exegesis (this principle places a translator into the hermeneutical tradition of the Church when their translation licences are balanced by dogmatic accuracy);

5) comparing the liturgical language with the New Testament text (a translator has to remember about lexical stock and formulae transferred straight from the Bible, and they should be the same as they are in the official translation of the Bible, otherwise believers will not decode the direct contact and associations with the Bible);

6) using the ‘high’ style of the Ukrainian language, paying attention to its melodiousness, purity and accessibility for the general reader;

7) to translate the Divine Liturgy into Ukrainian means to commemorate Ukrainian saints, the Ukrainian Church, the Ukrainian authorities, as well as to add prayers and litanies that are national in its content.

These principles apply to the translation of all liturgical texts. Although he did not use some basic translation terms (such as equivalence, translatability, etc.), he determined three cornerstones of liturgical translation: semantics (incorporating dogmatic exegesis), poetics (paying attention to the specific poetics of separate original texts and the poetics of expected target reception) and performability (including musical patterns and specific features of aural perception). Over time, Ohiyenko’s views were only ‘supplemented’ by other researchers, but not changed radically: biblical phrasing should be properly venerated and cited in liturgical texts [29]; liturgical translation should be doctrinally correct and free of ideological influences [27, p. 23, 25]; liturgical poetics is realized in translation multiplicity, and it will always need a new interpretation and translation [20; 25]; each translator has to resolve the problem of the correlation between the poetics of the original languages and that of the target language [33; 31]; sound and music qualities of the text should also stay in the scope of the translator’s attention [12].

However, the person whose views are periodically referred to is Eugene Nida. In the 1960s, he built a very successful opposition of formal and dynamic equivalence which reflected orientation at form or content. In the 1990s, he himself claimed that this dichotomy was out-of-date and required reconstruction in the direction of functional equivalence which was to cover more communicative and cultural dimensions [22]. This later motivation reached fewer liturgical translators, but in various milieus, the drawbacks of the simplistic dichotomy of form versus content were debated [14, p. 389; 4, p. 353–354].

Keeping in mind the division of liturgical translation problems into three groups – semantic, poetic and performative, the researcher can easily attribute the profitability of verse translation for resolving – or searching resolutions of – poetically-ground problems. Seeing liturgical texts as poetry opens the way to applying rich literature in this domain to religious texts and deepens the insightful observations of liturgical translation criticism which is desirable in all translators' routine work. The group of performative problems calls for inviting rhetoricians and musicologists (especially ethnomusicologists) to reconcile foreign and native speech melodies. The group of semantic problems focuses on the interpretative nexus of verbal signs, and the translator has to scrutinize the lexical, cultural, dogmatic and even grammatical information encoded in one sign.

The crux of liturgical translation debate is the attitude to language as a tool of disseminating information and, thus, evangelization. Lingual codes are the tokens which speakers exchange in order to pass their messages. This is why it is an absolute must to remember that “each language has its own way of thinking and its unique network of signs” [27, p. 25]. A sign is valid when it is decoded and encoded by speakers, otherwise it loses its validity. Part of clergy underestimates the power of signs and believes that believers can – or should? – know somehow what is contained in the priest's sign, while the content of believers' sign may differ drastically. The selection of wrongly attributed signs builds not only the wall of misunderstanding between the priest and believers, but also the gap between the Gospels and believers.

Any language is a historical formation, too. It is understood and appreciated in the same way – actually, a more or less similar way – in one place at specific time. In the English-language religious discourse, David Crystal observed the radical change in the forms of religious verbal expression within quite a short time span: “A generation ago [in the early 1960s], the liturgical linguistic norms in much of the English-speaking world involved a large number of low-level lexical and grammatical usages that were very plainly idiosyncratic to this genre. ... Today [at the turn of the 1990s] many of the most distinctive features have gone, in the revised formal Christian liturgies. There is no doubt that modern liturgical styles use far fewer distinctive grammatical features” [16, p. 122–123]. He records rather archaic features of grammar, lexis and idioms, like ‘thou’, ‘livest’, ‘brethren’, ‘whence’, ‘praise be...’, ‘he, having eaten, went’, etc. These features were not used outside religious and legal discourse, and they made the liturgical speech so peculiar. Nevertheless, their functionality was not productive among wide masses of public, and this understanding determines other ways of searching tools of expressing sacrum and profanum in a language while preserving concinnity from the original text.

Macroriterion and microcriteria. Liturgical translation criticism has a solid basis for deep-penetrating textual studies. Yet, analysts have to deal with the most evident textual discrepancy and error: omissions. Omissions are slightly permissible – not sanctioned, but tolerated in interpreting; extremely rarely are they called ‘zero equivalence’ in translating; generally, they are regarded as marks of the very poor quality of a translation and of the very low competency of a translator. It is not clear why omissions are not so rare in liturgical texts [21, p. 377; 26, p. 54–57]. This fact can be explained by priests’ excessive liturgical creativity. However, this case is simple from the viewpoint of theoretical considerations. More complicated is the qualitative assessment of a word, its meaning and function in source and target texts.

It makes sense to put the so-called ‘dogmatic equivalence’ into the core of liturgical translation quality assessment and to consider it a multi-component or multi-level phenomenon. What is really important in liturgical translation is not ‘formal’, ‘denotative’, ‘stylistic’, ‘pragmatic’, ‘cultural’, ‘cognitive’, ‘associative’ or similar equivalence, but ‘dogmatic’ equivalence which incorporates different semantic components which are essential for the relevant interpretation of a religious text. The translation analyst can pinpoint several levels of such equivalence:

- 1) on the level of terms;
- 2) on the level of lexical or cultural ortheological interpretation;
- 3) on the level of grammatical interpretation;
- 4) on the level of phonetic prosody.

Terms should be understood in their broadest sense. In the Catholic-Orthodox juxtaposition, the terms ‘Virgin Mary’ and ‘Theotokos’ are used for the same person: St Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ. At once, they orient believers’ attention to the dogmatic value of this name: Catholics underline Her chastity, and Orthodox believers appeal to Her status of God’s Mother which turns Her into St Mary the Protectress of all Christians.

The question of usual words used as terms is part of the terminological line of thought. ‘Bread’¹ and ‘wine’ should be considered terms because their ingredients and preparation are regulated so strictly that the motivated suspicion arises if we speak about the same object in different liturgical traditions. Actually, it is similar to the old discussion of denotative meaning: butter is named differently in various languages, but its taste and consistency differ in various countries, and therefore different names denote different objects.

In 16th-century catechisms, theologians were very cautious with the dogmatic lexis: in the case of the Creed, they considered the term “σύμβολον” untranslatable and preferred the transliteration, otherwise they would have to write the whole phrasing like the Confession of faith [6, p. 268]. The very term meant a lot from a sign to a text.

In the Ecumenical Prayer of the Melkite Greek Catholic Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, one appeal contains the lexeme “Orthodox”: “Again, we pray for the blessed and ever to be remembered founders of this holy church (or monastery,) and for our **Orthodox** Fathers and brethren who have gone before us and who here or elsewhere have been laid to pious rest” [13, p. 272]. Both the Eastern and Western Churches apply the term

¹ Bread was a topic of a special study by Thomas O’Loughlin [24].

“Orthodox” (dogmatically correct) and “Catholic” (universal, ecumenical), however in general perception, these term nuances are not well-known or well-remembered. It is even truer in aural perception when believers pray, meditate, and do not recognize the clear-cut discrimination of the nature of Christ’s Church, but instead, they overlap it with the more frequently heard names of the earthly institutions in Constantinople/Istanbul and in Rome. This is why translators try some experimenting. The relevant text in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Liturgy is the Insistent Litany with the following words: “We also pray for the people here present who await Your great and bountiful mercies, for those who have been kind to us, and for all **orthodox** Christians” [1, p. 65]. Although the avoidance of capitalization in the spelling of the word is a good option for a written text, it is not perceived properly in speaking. In addition, the lexeme is absolutely ambivalent in the Ukrainian text [1, p. 64], as no changes were introduced here.

The lexical interpretation of any liturgical word will undeniably enter the domains of cultural and theological hermeneutics. The indispensable notion of Christianity is “λόγος”, most often cited according to the Gospel of John (1:1). The “Greek-English Lexicon” by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott fixes 34 senses of this word in semantic groups of reckoning, computation, relation, explanation, debate, oration, utterance, saying, subject-matter, expression and the Wisdom of God. The same complexity is rendered in G. W. H. Lampe’s “Patristic Greek Lexicon” which hints at the integral dominance of mind over verbal expression. Thus, the translation “In the beginning was the Word” could have sounded as “In the beginning was Mind/Idea”. The theological choice which has influenced all contemporary biblical and liturgical contexts originated from the Vulgate. However, modern theologians see the sign of “the Word” much wider by covering the ideas of Life as well as those of reason, conscience and prophecy [15, p. 774]. This collection of rational and theological interpretation stimulates the search for a different and similarly semantically and dogmatically voluminous word, although the accepted theological tradition is already perfectly-balanced and blocks further search. We have to admit only that in Christian history, much could have changed for the better if people had been taught to think more before believing and acting.

In the Ukrainian Christian space, i.e. Ukraine’s Orthodox and Greek Catholic liturgical traditions, the debate arises periodically about the phrase “servant of God” whose Ukrainian correspondent phrase sounds “раб Божий” (literally: a slave of God). The trouble lies in the Old Greek phrasing “δούλος του Θεού”, where “δούλος” was “a born bondman” who experienced various types of relations with their lords, as well as in the Church Slavonic heritage, where “рабъ” derived from ‘work’ and meant a servant who could be a captive, a serf, a slave and also a subordinate subject doing the job of an employee and servant. In New Ukrainian, the difference between “раб” and “слуга” is similar to the one between the English “slave” and “servant” where the former is “completely divested of freedom and personal rights” (acc. to the Oxford English Dictionary). In the theological understanding, the deprivation of freedom and the right of choice can conclude a heretical concept that a Christian is not responsible for their sins, so human salvation is God’s will, but not human choice or work. This is the reason why voices appear in favour of the lexeme “слуга”. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian clergy is not ready to change this status quo [e.g. 2, p. 39], although some support is

visible in the Ukrainian translations of the Bible (Romans 6: 22). The ‘Orthodox’¹ translation deploys the lexeme “раб” (slave): “А тепер, звільнившись від гріха й ставши **рабами Богів**, маєте плід ваш на освячення, а кінець життя вічне” (translated by Ivan Ohiyenko), while the ‘Greek Catholic’ translations allows some space for experimenting: “Тепер же, звільнившись від гріха і ставши **слугами Богів**, маєте ваш плід на освячення, а кінець – життя вічне” (translated by Mykola Khomenko). The lexeme “слуга” (servant) provides more space for associations with the citizenship of God’s nation which is granted to believers as the result of the Sacrament of Baptism.

The search for theological grounding occasionally leads to overinterpretation. This is the case of the Greek phrase “εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων” whose Old Hebrew structure for denoting magnitude entered even European languages: Latin “in saecula saeculorum”, English “into the ages of ages”, Polish “przez wszystkie wieki wieków/na wieki wieków”, Church Slavonic “во вѣки вѣковъ”, etc. In Ukrainian linguaculture, this phrase has two possible and well-accepted translation variants: “на віки віків” (taken from the Church Slavonic pattern) and “віки вічні” (shaped by the Ukrainian poetics). The latter was used in some older religious texts, by Classical Ukrainian authors (like Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko, Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi) and resembles the known Ukrainian poetical means like “вольная воля” (literally: “free freedom”; cited by Taras Shevchenko). The root of the debate over the choice between the two options is the foreignizing or domesticating approach, and there is no necessity for inventing extra theological motivation for highlighting the meaning of eternity in the stable system of a target language (for the religious dimension, see [3]).

Grammatical interpretation has had a dogmatic value, as well. History knows the case of St Maximus the Greek, a 16th-century monk, philosopher and translator active in Muscovy. Assigned the task of translating and correcting liturgical books, he substituted the Greek aorist tense for the Church Slavonic perfect tense and was accused of heresy: Moscow’s theologians claimed that aorist designated Christ’s eternal nature, and perfect marked the termination of His kingdom [9, p. 427]. Fortunately, we do not use grammar for such exegetical judgements nowadays, but sometimes dogmae do rule grammar.

In the sign of the Cross, the formula “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” has problems with locating the correct shoulder for the part “Holy” and for the part “Spirit”. This matter appeared in Polish translation. The Polish Catholic formula sounds “W imię Ojca, i Syna, i **Ducha Świętego**” when “Duch” is on the left shoulder, and “Święty” is on the right shoulder. This is the Roman pattern. The Byzantine pattern is reverse, and the Polish Orthodox formula sounds “W imię Ojca, i Syna, i **Świętego Ducha**” which violates Polish syntax. Astonishingly, English translators did not change grammar but the symbolic marking of the shoulders: the same formula is used both for the Catholics and for the Orthodox, though in different liturgical traditions, a different shoulder designates the other part of the phrase.

¹ The Ukrainian Churches do not have the officially-accepted translations: Ivan Ohiyenko was an Orthodox metropolitan whose translation is favoured in Orthodox and Protestant congregations; Mykola Khomenko was a Greek Catholic priest whose translation is more often referred to as “The Roman Bible” in the Greek Catholic milieu. However, there is no ban for using other translations in the Churches.

The phonetical level easily turns into musical trouble for translators and musicologists. Here the main idea is to push the melodies elaborated by relevant chants (like the Gregorian Chant in Western Christianity; or more specifically: Ukrainian (Kyiv and Halych) Chants for translations in other languages). However, the phonological level is mostly theoretical, although the Ukrainian history of religious translation can provide one sample of even this type of dogmatic equivalence. This is the spelling of the Sacrament of Baptism whose sounding more resembles the name of Christ: “хрищення” instead of more popular and normal “хрещення”. Although Ivan Ohiyenko does not accept this spelling as a standard, he followed the idea of his Protestant advisors-editors. From the viewpoint of Ukrainian pronunciation, the non-accentuated sounds [e] and [и] are pronounced in the same way. The written spelling and nominal form only clearly demonstrate the similarity between “Христос” and “хрищення”. This linguistic experiment is interesting from the dogmatic perspective, but it is more an etymological coincidence which makes this fact exceptional.

Dogmatic equivalence is even dependent on the technical conditions of search for the original. Translating the Orthodox Pentecostarion [18], Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware disclosed their translation technique: they translated from Greek, although they introduced some corrections according to the Church Slavonic text. Thus, the translation was to represent two – Greek and Russian – liturgical traditions, but factually, it represents none, as each tradition will find deviations from their liturgical praxis. Rationally, this approach is faulty as the translation produced corresponds to no real original in any existing liturgical tradition and, thus, should be regarded as incorrect. On the other hand, the Church Slavonic text is a misleading concept, too, because different Orthodox liturgical traditions possess different Church Slavonic *textus recepti* in the same language for their liturgical use.

The translation critic should be very attentive with identifying the very original, as a single liturgical tradition can introduce numerous changes within a short period of time. A good example is the alternating or combined use of the words “rest” (“спокій”) and “memory” (“пам’ять”) in the Ukrainian Orthodox Office for the Dead:

– Ukraine, 1646: “Сѡрабѣ Божїмъ, Имѡрекѣ: и **блаженномъ покои** его, Господу помолїмса” [17, vol. 1, p. [589]];

– Canada, 1954: “За раба Божого (*або*: рабу Божу), *їм’я*, і за **блаженний спокій** його, Господу помолїмось!” [5, p. 132];

– USA, 1963: “За незабутнього раба Божого (рабу Божу) (*їм’я*), за **спокій і добру пам’ять** його (її) Господеві помолїмось” [10, p. 68];

– USA, 1976: “За незабутнього раба Божого (рабу Божу, рабів Божих), за **спокій і блаженну пам’ять** його (її, їх) Господеві помолїмось” [11, p. 36].

These changes reflect the vibrant life of religious congregations and milieus: all the changes were introduced officially and supposedly approved of by the whole synod of the Church. This discrepancy is important when translations are used in different denominations of the same liturgical group and the whole texts can turn out to be a translator’s false friends.

Conclusions. Christian liturgical translation is millennium-old, but only in the 20th century researchers started including it into the scope of their academic interests. This inclusion is also explained by the development of the very translation studies which shaped as a separate discipline at the same time.

From the very beginning, it set up a circle of translation problems translators and critics were to cope with: lexical preciseness, cultural accuracy, dogmatic correctness, poetical expressiveness and performative functionality. This group of linguistic and theological relations has been experienced by every liturgical translator and considered by academia till now. However, one might have observed the difference between the attitude of linguists (who introduce into discussions the matter of relations between a sacred text and a reading community) and of theologians (who recognize the authority of a sacred text at the expense of cultural historicity). These tensions reflect the multifaceted nature of liturgical translation, and they prove the unavoidable necessity of new translations even if previous translations are not bad.

In the core of translation activities lies the value of dogmatic equivalence which will legitimize a translation for public use. At the same time, it can be viewed as a complex linguistic phenomenon which will benefit from and contribute both to theological interpretation and linguistic understanding. Thus, dogmatic equivalence is a structural phenomenon which can be divided into different levels, components or dimensions. The nexus of translation problems will have to deploy the approbated solutions from sci-tech, poetry and literary translation. The most important principle which is to be acknowledged properly is that any translation is an act of creating and experimenting, and linguistic experiments can help design a dogmatic translation option in the future which will be readily accepted both according to theologians' dogmas and to believers' sensations.

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ДОГМАТИЧНА ЕКВІВАЛЕНТНІСТЬ: КЛЮЧ ДО ЛІТУРГІЙНОГО ПЕРЕКЛАДУ?

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У статті представлено основи літургійного перекладу, які допоможуть виявити суть цієї часткової теорії перекладу. Відомо, що літургійні тексти поєднують три виміри релігійного дискурсу: семантику (особливо догматичну екзегезу), поетику (особливу поетику оригінальних єврейських і грецьких текстів) і виконання (включаючи особливості слухового сприйняття). Історія дослідження літургійного перекладу налічує щонайменше століття. Рівно 100 років тому український дослідник Іван Огієнко опублікував основоположну статтю, питання та ідеї якої повторювалися та відображалися в більшості подальших досліджень, які безпосередньо й конкретно стосувалися біблійної лексики, використаної у літургійних текстах, доктринальної правильності та ідеологічних впливів, питань інтерпретаційних та часових перекладів, проблеми співвідношення поетики мов оригіналу та перекладу, відповідних звукових і музичних якостей тексту.

Мовні зразки й богословська герменевтика формують особливий тип еквівалентності, застосовний до текстів для літургійного використання, – це догматична еквівалентність, яку можна розглядати з чотирьох поглядів: термінологічної сутності; лексичної, культурної чи теологічної інтерпретації; граматичної значеннєвості; фонетичних засобів для богословського тлумачення та літургійного виконання. Важко є витримати належний баланс між ставленням лінгвістів (які зосереджуються на зв'язках між священним текстом і читацькою спільнотою) і теологами (які наголошують на авторитетному статусі священного тексту, але не звертають повноцінної уваги на культурну історичність). Отже, догматична еквівалентність є структурним явищем, яке можна розділити на різні рівні, компоненти чи виміри. Взаємозв'язок перекладацьких проблем створює умови для залучення апробованих рішень з науково-технічного, віршового й художнього перекладу. Революційний принцип, який варто належно осмислити, полягає в тому, що навіть літургійний переклад може отримати користь від мовного експериментування.

Ключові слова: теорія перекладу, літургійний переклад, інтерпретація, еквівалентність, культурні норми.