

MAIN PROBLEMS AND MODERN TRENDS IN TODAY'S LINGUISTIC SPHERE

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Abstract: This paper explores the integral role of comparative linguistics in translation studies, emphasizing how linguistic comparisons between source and target languages help address issues of equivalence and translation accuracy. By analyzing cross-linguistic structures, semantics, and cultural contexts, comparative linguistics offers critical insights that aid translators in producing faithful and meaningful translations. It also investigates problems such as non-equivalence, lexical gaps, syntactic divergence, idiomatic and cultural expressions, and how these issues can be addressed using comparative linguistic principles. The discussion includes examples from English and other typologically diverse languages such as Russian, Uzbek, French, and Japanese. Ultimately, the study advocates for a stronger integration of comparative linguistic knowledge in translator training and practice.

Key words: comparative linguistics, translation studies, equivalence, non-equivalence, contrastive analysis, linguistic typology, translation theory.

Introduction

Translation is not a mere substitution of words from one language to another; it is a complex cognitive and linguistic activity that requires deep knowledge of both the source and target languages. One of the central challenges in translation studies is achieving equivalence ensuring that the translated text preserves the meaning, tone, and intent of the original. However, linguistic and cultural differences often hinder direct equivalence. Comparative linguistics, which systematically studies the similarities and differences between languages, offers essential tools for identifying and overcoming translation challenges. By analyzing phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects of languages, comparative linguistics enhances the translator's ability to recognize linguistic asymmetries, anticipate translation difficulties, and apply effective strategies to resolve them. This paper explores how comparative linguistic analysis supports translation by addressing equivalence and translation issues, using theoretical perspectives and practical examples from multiple language pairs.

Methodology

This research is based on a descriptive and analytical methodology. It draws on qualitative data from contrastive linguistic studies and translation theory literature, as well as examples from bilingual corpora, translated texts, and dictionaries. The analysis focuses on:

Lexical and semantic equivalence

Syntactic and grammatical differences

Cultural and pragmatic disparities

Strategies for dealing with non-equivalence

Examples are taken from English–Russian, English–Uzbek, English–Japanese, and English–French pairs to illustrate how comparative linguistic tools aid in real translation situations. The study adopts a functionalist approach to translation, prioritizing communicative equivalence over word-for-word correspondence.

Results and Discussion**The Contribution of Comparative Linguistics to Translation Studies**

Comparative linguistics enables translators to anticipate structural and semantic mismatches. For example, English relies on strict word order for syntactic clarity (SVO – Subject-Verb-Object),

while in languages like Russian or Uzbek, word order is more flexible due to inflectional morphology. Understanding these typological contrasts allows translators to adapt sentence structure without altering meaning.

Moreover, comparative linguistic studies reveal patterns of grammaticalization, metaphorical extension, and idiomatic usage unique to each language. These patterns are crucial when translating metaphorical or culturally loaded expressions. Comparative studies also offer insights into historical language development, which helps in translating archaic or classical texts.

Equivalence: Types and Challenges

Equivalence in translation is not monolithic. Scholars such as Nida (1964), Catford (1965), and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) proposed different types of equivalence:

Formal equivalence: Word-for-word correspondence

Dynamic equivalence: Focus on meaning and naturalness in the target language

Functional equivalence: Adaptation of function or communicative purpose

Textual equivalence: Structural and stylistic parallelism at the text level

Comparative linguistics helps identify which type of equivalence is achievable or preferable in a given context. For example, the English idiom “kick the bucket” requires dynamic or functional equivalence in other languages, as literal translation would cause confusion.

Non-equivalence and Lexical Gaps

Non-equivalence arises when the target language lacks a direct counterpart for a source language word or phrase. This may occur due to:

Cultural-specific concepts (e.g., “Thanksgiving” in American culture)

Lexical gaps (e.g., Japanese *komorebi* – sunlight filtering through trees)

Grammatical asymmetry (e.g., Uzbek lacks articles, unlike English)

Comparative linguistics helps diagnose these gaps and suggest appropriate translation strategies such as:

Paraphrasing: Explaining the concept (e.g., *omotenashi* → “selfless hospitality”)

Loan translation or borrowing: Using foreign terms when appropriate

Adaptation: Substituting culturally equivalent items

These strategies prevent miscommunication and ensure the translation remains culturally relevant.

Syntactic and Structural Differences

Syntax often poses a major challenge. For instance, English uses auxiliary verbs for tense and aspect (“will have gone”), while Russian uses aspectual verb pairs. Translating such structures requires not just knowledge of vocabulary, but deep syntactic awareness.

Comparative linguistics exposes these differences and guides translators in making accurate syntactic adjustments. For example, in translating English relative clauses into Uzbek, translators may need to rephrase the entire sentence to retain clarity and coherence, as relative clauses function differently in Turkic languages.

Translation of Idioms and Figurative Language

Idioms and figurative expressions are typically culture-bound and rarely translatable word-for-word. Comparative linguistics aids in mapping idiomatic expressions across languages and identifying functional equivalents.

Example:

English: “Break a leg” (good luck)

Uzbek: “*Omad tilayman*” (I wish you success)

By understanding how different cultures express similar sentiments metaphorically, translators can replace idioms with culturally resonant alternatives in the target language.

Implications for Translator Training

Incorporating comparative linguistics into translator education equips future professionals with the analytical tools necessary to assess and solve translation problems. Comparative analysis promotes metalinguistic awareness, sensitivity to linguistic variation, and an understanding of how cultural worldviews shape language use.

In practical terms, translation curricula should include:

Comparative syntax and semantics

Cross-cultural pragmatics

Contrastive discourse analysis

Translation workshops focusing on equivalence and adaptation strategies

Conclusion

Comparative linguistics is indispensable in modern translation studies. It provides a theoretical and practical framework for understanding cross-linguistic differences and resolving translation challenges. By analyzing how languages encode meaning differently, translators can achieve more accurate, culturally appropriate, and communicatively effective translations. As the demand for high-quality translation increases in our globalized world, the synergy between comparative linguistics and translation studies must be strengthened. Integrating linguistic comparison into translator training and practice is essential for fostering deeper linguistic competence and intercultural communication skills.

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