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CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF TRANSLATION

Contrastive linguistics examines systematic differences and similarities between languages, generating hypotheses about transfer, non-equivalence and cultural encoding. When applied in the classroom, such analyses cultivate contrastive competence – the translator’s ability to foresee and resolve cross-linguistic divergences. Since the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid rise of translation technologies, particularly machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools, translation pedagogy has shifted toward hybrid, technology-integrated models [1]. This shift makes it essential for students not only to understand linguistic contrasts but also to evaluate machine-generated suggestions and post-edit them effectively. Recent reviews highlight the growing role of MT-aware instruction and the importance of embedding technology literacy into translator training [2].

Contrastive analysis and translation studies are best viewed as complementary. While contrastive linguistics provides systematic descriptions of cross-linguistic phenomena, translation studies supply functional and textual criteria for selecting equivalents in context. Corpus-based methods bridge the two disciplines by providing empirical evidence of natural language use in both original and translated texts [5]. In this way, contrastive competence - the knowledge of patterns and asymmetries between languages – should be considered a core sub-competence within translation curricula, alongside textual, cultural, technological, and research competences. Carefully designed classroom tasks based on contrastive

principles can develop learners' sensitivity to non-equivalence, collocational patterns, and pragmatic conventions. Moreover, using parallel and comparable corpora allows students to validate their intuitions with distributional evidence, reducing speculative equivalence choices and improving their justification of translation solutions [6].

Effective teaching practice requires a balance of focused exercises and real-world tasks. Instructors can combine short contrastive quizzes targeting grammar or lexis, with discovery activities that involve querying bilingual corpora, MT evaluation and post-editing, and reflective commentary [3]. Students should be encouraged to justify their choices with corpus evidence. Incorporating small, curated parallel corpora related to students' domains of study, such as legal, medical or journalistic texts, makes training more authentic. Digital platforms and multimodal training systems allow these activities to be scaled effectively at tertiary level. Empirical studies show that students achieve better outcomes when they engage with authentic translated texts and translation memory feedback).

Assessment practices should be aligned with this approach. Comparative rubrics that evaluate fidelity, readability, and cultural adequacy should be combined with process documentation, requiring students to annotate corpus evidence and record MT-related decisions. When non-literal solutions are chosen, students should provide corpus examples or explanations of why literal equivalents were insufficient. Short micro-research projects can also form part of evaluation, for example, small contrastive studies where students report on specific source–target constructions and discuss their pedagogical implications.

Conclusion. Contrastive linguistics, especially when combined with corpus methods and technology-aware pedagogy, empowers translators-in-training to make empirically grounded decisions. This integrated approach responds to contemporary demands for fidelity to meaning, effective cultural mediation, and operational competence with translation technologies. Adopting contrastive competence as an explicit curricular goal and equipping students with corpus and MT literacy will better prepare them for the challenges of modern translation practice [4]. At the same time, contrastive analysis nurtures critical thinking by training students to question literal correspondences and search for deeper functional equivalents. It strengthens their awareness of cultural and pragmatic subtleties, helping them avoid mechanistic translation choices and instead produce context-sensitive solutions. This reflective capacity is especially important in a globalized world where professional translators are expected to balance linguistic precision with intercultural communication skills.

Furthermore, embedding contrastive linguistics into translator education supports the creation of more inclusive and adaptive curricula. By engaging with both corpora and digital translation tools, students experience authentic professional workflows and learn to navigate the complexities of evolving technologies. Such preparation ensures that future translators remain competitive in a labor market shaped by AI-driven change and the growing demand for high-quality, human-mediated translation. In this sense, contrastive pedagogy does not merely preserve traditional linguistic knowledge, but modernizes it for the digital era, ensuring that translation training remains future-oriented and relevant.

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