

GRAMMATICAL PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

Supervisor: Abduraxmanova Zilola Yoqubjon qizi

Jizzakh branch of the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo
Ulugbek The faculty of Psychology, department of Foreign languages
Phylology and foreign languages

Student of group 301-21: Pardayeva Mashhura Farhod qizi

Annotation: This article explores the various grammatical challenges translators face when converting text from one language to another. It highlights key issues such as differences in word order, tense and aspect, grammatical gender, articles, pronoun usage, verb conjugation, and number agreement. The article also discusses how idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs complicate translation due to their unique grammatical structures that do not always have direct equivalents in other languages. Through examining these challenges, the article underscores the importance of understanding both linguistic structures and cultural context to achieve accurate, meaningful translations. It emphasizes the need for translators to adapt their approach depending on the specific grammatical conventions of both the source and target languages, ensuring clarity and preserving the original message.

Key words: Grammatical problems, translation, word order, tense, aspect, grammatical gender, articles, pronoun usage, verb conjugation, number agreement, idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, linguistic structures, cultural context, accuracy, target language, source language, language differences, sentence structure.

Grammatical Problems of Translation: Challenges and Solutions

Translation is a complex task that involves not only rendering words from one language to another but also maintaining the original message, tone, and context.

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One of the most significant challenges in translation lies in addressing **grammatical differences** between languages. Grammatical structures vary considerably across languages, which can create confusion or misinterpretation when translating. This article explores the common grammatical problems faced during translation and offers insights into how these challenges can be managed.

Word Order Differences

Languages often have different word order conventions, which can lead to misunderstandings when translating. For instance, English typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure ("I eat an apple"), while Japanese uses a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure ("I an apple eat"). These structural differences require translators to not only translate the words but also rearrange them to fit the syntax of the target language. In languages like German or Latin, word order can be even more flexible because of their reliance on case markings, where the word's role in the sentence is indicated by its form rather than its position. Translators must carefully assess context and maintain clarity, ensuring that the meaning is preserved despite word order changes.

Tense and Aspect Differences

The treatment of tense and aspect varies greatly across languages. For example, while English uses distinct past, present, and future tenses, other languages, such as Chinese or Russian, may use aspect rather than tense to indicate the timing or duration of an action. The aspect might emphasize whether the action is completed, ongoing, or habitual, without necessarily specifying when it happened. In such cases, translators must navigate these nuances carefully. For instance, translating a sentence from English to Chinese may involve omitting the tense entirely or conveying it through context, which can lead to discrepancies in meaning if not done accurately.

Grammatical Gender

Grammatical gender is another significant challenge in translation. Some languages, like Spanish, French, and German, assign gender to nouns, which affects adjective and article agreements. For instance, in French, "le livre" (the book) is masculine, while "la table" (the table) is feminine. In contrast, English does not have grammatical gender, which can lead to difficulties when translating between the two. When translating from gendered languages to gender-neutral languages, or vice versa, translators must decide how to maintain the grammatical integrity of the sentence while adhering to the target language's conventions. In some cases, gender-neutral alternatives might be used, but this can sometimes result in ambiguity or a loss of the original nuance.

Articles and Determiners

Languages like English, Spanish, and French use articles (definite or indefinite) before nouns to specify them. However, many languages, such as Russian, Chinese, or Japanese, do not use articles at all. This creates a major challenge when translating between languages with and without articles. In languages without articles, translators may need to decide whether to introduce definite or indefinite articles to clarify the meaning. Conversely, when translating from a language with articles into one without them, the translator may need to remove or replace them, which can lead to differences in how the information is perceived.

Pronoun Usage and Politeness

Pronouns play a crucial role in sentence construction and meaning. Different languages use pronouns in ways that reflect cultural norms, levels of formality, or even gender. In languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Spanish,

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there are varying degrees of politeness reflected in the choice of pronouns and verb forms, making them more complex to translate. For example, in Japanese, the pronoun "anata" (you) is avoided in many situations, especially in formal settings, and verbs often carry honorifics. In English, however, pronouns are used more liberally, and politeness is conveyed through tone or additional phrases. Translators must find ways to express the same level of respect or intimacy, which often involves more than a literal translation of pronouns.

Verb Conjugation and Mood

Some languages have more complex verb conjugations and moods than others. For instance, languages like Italian or Spanish employ various verb tenses and moods (subjunctive, indicative, conditional, etc.) that express nuances of doubt, necessity, or hypothetical situations. English, by comparison, uses fewer forms of conjugation and relies more on auxiliary verbs. Translators must carefully choose the correct verb form to capture the intended meaning. For instance, translating a sentence from Spanish that uses the subjunctive mood might require a shift in tone or verb choice in English to convey the same sense of uncertainty or hypothetical action.

Plurality and Number Agreement

Plurality in language can also present challenges, especially when it comes to translating between languages with different rules for singular and plural forms. Some languages, like English, mark plural nouns and verbs with a simple "-s" or "-es." Others, like Arabic or Hebrew, use a dual form to indicate two items, and some languages, such as Japanese, do not indicate plurals at all unless contextually necessary. Translators must decide how to convey plurality accurately in these languages. This could mean adding or omitting information

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based on the conventions of the target language or making choices about how to handle collective or abstract nouns.

Idiomatic Expressions and Phrasal Verbs

Many idiomatic expressions or phrasal verbs are tied closely to a language's grammar and cannot be translated literally. In English, phrases like "give up" or "break down" have meanings that extend beyond the individual meanings of the words themselves. In languages like German or Chinese, similar expressions might have entirely different structures or idiomatic roots. The challenge for translators is to find equivalent expressions in the target language that capture the same sense without distorting the meaning. Sometimes, a direct translation is impossible, and the translator must resort to paraphrasing or using a completely different expression that fits the context.

Conclusion

Grammatical problems in translation are inevitable due to the inherent differences between languages. However, skilled translators have developed methods for dealing with these issues, from adjusting word order to carefully choosing pronouns, tenses, and verb forms. A successful translation goes beyond merely translating words; it requires understanding the subtleties of grammar, cultural context, and the intended message. By addressing grammatical differences thoughtfully, translators can ensure that the essence of the original text is preserved, while making it comprehensible and appropriate for the target audience.

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