



CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ARABIC AND UZBEK SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSLATION PEDAGOGY

<https://doi.org/10.57033/mijournals-2026-4-0245>

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Received: 15-05-2026

Accepted: 28-05-2026

Published: 09-06-2026



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Abstract. *This study presents a systematic contrastive analysis of syntactic structures in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Modern Literary Uzbek (MLU), with particular attention to the implications of structural divergences for translation pedagogy. Arabic and Uzbek belong to fundamentally different language families—Semitic and Turkic respectively—and exhibit typologically contrasting syntactic patterns in word order, agreement systems, relative clause formation, and nominal modification. Despite the historical and cultural connections between Arabic and Uzbek through the Islamic scholarly tradition, systematic contrastive linguistic analysis of the two languages remains underdeveloped. Employing a parallel corpus of 600 sentence pairs drawn from literary, journalistic, and academic texts, this study identifies and classifies the principal syntactic divergences between Arabic and Uzbek, analyzes the translation challenges arising from each divergence, and proposes pedagogical strategies for addressing these challenges in Arabic-Uzbek translation training programs. Results reveal that word order asymmetry (VSO/SVO in Arabic vs. SOV in Uzbek) constitutes the most pervasive source of translation difficulty, followed by the Arabic system of grammatical agreement (gender, number, case), relative clause structures, and the idafa (construct state) construction. The study identifies five categories of syntactic transfer errors in student translations and proposes a contrastive-based pedagogical framework for systematic error prevention. The findings carry direct implications for the methodology of Arabic translation instruction in Central Asian universities.*

Keywords: *contrastive analysis, Arabic syntax, Uzbek syntax, translation pedagogy, word order, syntactic transfer, VSO, SOV, idafa, agreement systems.*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Arabic-Uzbek translation in Central Asian universities occupies a position of strategic importance at the intersection of linguistic scholarship, cultural heritage, and contemporary professional demand. Arabic has been studied in the

territories of modern Uzbekistan for over thirteen centuries, and the Arabic linguistic tradition has profoundly shaped the development of Uzbek grammatical terminology, literary conventions, and intellectual vocabulary (Versteegh, 2014:1). The contemporary demand for qualified Arabic-Uzbek translators—driven by diplomatic, commercial, religious, and academic needs—has intensified the urgency of developing effective translation pedagogies grounded in rigorous linguistic analysis.

Contrastive analysis (CA), as formulated by Lado (1957:2) and refined by subsequent generations of applied linguists, provides the theoretical foundation for identifying the structural differences between source and target languages that are most likely to generate translation difficulties and learner errors. The fundamental premise of CA is that the degree of structural similarity or difference between two languages predicts the relative ease or difficulty of specific translation tasks: structures that are similar across languages transfer positively, while structures that differ significantly generate negative transfer, manifesting as systematic errors in learner production (James, 1980:3).

Despite the importance of Arabic-Uzbek translation in the Central Asian educational context, systematic contrastive analyses of Arabic and Uzbek syntactic structures remain remarkably scarce. This study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive corpus-based contrastive analysis of the principal syntactic divergences between the two languages and deriving pedagogical implications for translation instruction.

Research on Arabic contrastive linguistics has produced a substantial body of work comparing Arabic with English (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989:12), French (Blachère & Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 1975:34), and other European languages, but comparisons with Turkic languages are significantly less developed. Johanson and Csato (1998:15) provided a comprehensive reference grammar of Turkic languages, including Uzbek, that enables systematic comparison with other language families. Versteegh (2014:1) offered the most authoritative survey of Arabic linguistic thought and its historical influence on grammatical traditions across the Islamic world, including Central Asia.

Within the specific Arabic-Turkic contrastive domain, Eker (2006:45) analyzed syntactic differences between Arabic and Turkish that are largely applicable to Uzbek given the close genetic relationship between the two Turkic languages. Menges (1995:67) examined the historical influence of Arabic on Turkic languages, documenting the extensive lexical borrowing from Arabic into Uzbek while noting that syntactic influence was minimal, leaving the fundamental SOV word order and agglutinative morphology of Uzbek intact despite centuries of intensive Arabic contact.

In the Uzbek scholarly context, Hasanov (2019:23) examined the challenges of Arabic-Uzbek literary translation with attention to syntactic restructuring, while Rahimov (2020:56) investigated common errors in student Arabic-Uzbek translations, identifying word order transfer as the most frequent error category. The present study builds on these foundations by providing a more comprehensive and empirically grounded contrastive analysis with explicit pedagogical implications.

METHODS

A purpose-built parallel corpus of 600 Arabic-Uzbek sentence pairs was compiled from three genre categories: literary fiction (200 pairs from Arabic novels and their published Uzbek translations), journalistic prose (200 pairs from bilingual news sources), and academic writing (200 pairs from bilingual scholarly publications). The corpus was designed to ensure balanced representation of the principal syntactic structures of both languages across diverse register and genre contexts (Baker, 2018:78).

Each sentence pair was analyzed for syntactic structure in both languages using a framework that identified: (a) constituent order (subject, verb, object, and modifiers); (b) agreement patterns (gender, number, person, case); (c) subordinate clause structures (relative, conditional, temporal, causal); (d) nominal modification patterns (adjective placement, genitive constructions); and (e) voice and aspect marking. Syntactic divergences were classified according to a five-level taxonomy: (1) order permutation (change in constituent order), (2) structural addition (insertion of elements absent in the source), (3) structural deletion (omission of source elements), (4) category shift (change in grammatical category), and (5) structural restructuring (fundamental reorganization of syntactic architecture). Two trained linguists independently coded a 20% sample for inter-rater reliability (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.88$).

Additionally, 80 student translations (40 Arabic-to-Uzbek and 40 Uzbek-to-Arabic) produced by third- and fourth-year translation students were collected and analyzed for syntactic transfer errors, providing empirical evidence of the specific translation difficulties predicted by the contrastive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most pervasive and consequential syntactic divergence between Arabic and Uzbek is their contrasting basic word orders. Arabic predominantly employs Verb-

Subject-Object (VSO) order in verbal sentences, with Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) also available, particularly in nominal sentences and topicalized constructions. Uzbek, as a typical Turkic language, employs a rigid Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order in which the verb occupies the final position in the clause (Johanson & Csato, 1998:42).

Table 1. Word Order Patterns in Arabic and Uzbek

Feature	Arabic (MSA)	Uzbek (MLU)	Translation Impact
Basic order	VSO / SVO	SOV	Major restructuring
Adj. placement	Post-nominal	Pre-nominal	Reversal required
Genitive (idafa)	Head-Dependent	Dependent-Head	Reversal required
Rel. clause	Post-nominal + alladhi	Pre-nominal + -gan	Restructuring
Adposition	Prepositions	Postpositions	Reversal required
Negation	Pre-verbal particle	Verb suffix (-ma-)	Morphological shift

Note. MSA = Modern Standard Arabic; MLU = Modern Literary Uzbek.

This word order divergence affects virtually every aspect of the translation process, requiring translators to perform systematic constituent reordering at the clause level. In the student translation corpus, word order transfer errors constituted 38.4% of all syntactic errors, confirming the prediction that this divergence represents the single most challenging structural difference for Arabic-Uzbek translators (Rahimov, 2020:62).

Arabic possesses a complex system of grammatical agreement in which verbs agree with their subjects in person, number, and gender; adjectives agree with their modified nouns in gender, number, case, and definiteness; and pronouns and demonstratives encode gender distinctions. Uzbek, by contrast, lacks grammatical gender entirely, uses a single set of personal pronouns without gender distinction, and marks agreement only for person and number on verbs (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989:78).

This asymmetry creates distinctive translation challenges in both directions. In Arabic-to-Uzbek translation, the loss of gender information often requires compensatory strategies—such as the explicit naming of referents where Arabic uses gendered pronouns—to avoid ambiguity. In Uzbek-to-Arabic translation, the translator must assign appropriate gender to every noun, adjective, pronoun, and verb, making decisions that have no basis in the source text and require comprehensive knowledge of Arabic gender assignment rules. In the student corpus, gender agreement errors constituted 22.7% of syntactic errors in Uzbek-to-Arabic translations (Hasanov, 2019:34).

The Arabic idafa (construct state) construction, in which a noun in the construct form is followed by a noun in the genitive case to express possession, specification, or other

relationships, represents a syntactic pattern with no direct structural equivalent in Uzbek. While Uzbek expresses similar semantic relationships through the *izofat* construction (borrowed from Persian grammar) using the possessive suffixes and the linking particle, the structural mechanics are fundamentally different: Arabic *idafa* places the head noun first (*kitab al-mudarris*, “book of the teacher”), while Uzbek places the dependent first (*o’qituvchining kitobi*, “teacher’s book”) (Versteegh, 2014:234).

Complex *idafa* chains—in which three or more nouns are linked in a single construct phrase—present particular translation challenges, as the linear order of the constituent nouns must be reversed and the syntactic relationships between them re-encoded using Uzbek morphological resources. The student corpus revealed that *idafa*-related errors constituted 15.3% of syntactic errors, with complex multi-term *idafa* constructions generating the highest error rates (Eker, 2006:89).

Arabic forms relative clauses using post-nominal relative pronouns (*alladhi*, *allati*, *alladhina*, etc.) that agree with the antecedent in gender and number, followed by a clause containing a resumptive pronoun referring back to the antecedent. Uzbek, by contrast, forms relative clauses using pre-nominal participial constructions with the suffix *-gan* (past) or *-(a)yotgan* (present), with no relative pronoun or resumptive pronoun. This structural difference requires not merely the reordering of constituents but a fundamental reconfiguration of the syntactic architecture of the clause (Johanson & Csato, 1998:156).

The translation of Arabic relative clauses into Uzbek requires the translator to convert a finite clause with an explicit relative pronoun and resumptive pronoun into a participial construction with implicit reference—a transformation that demands both syntactic competence and pragmatic sensitivity. In student translations, relative clause errors constituted 12.8% of syntactic errors, with the most common error being the attempt to translate Arabic relative clauses using calqued structures that preserve the Arabic word order rather than adopting the native Uzbek participial construction (James, 1980:56).

Based on the empirical findings, this study proposes a five-component pedagogical framework for addressing syntactic divergences in Arabic-Uzbek translation training. The first component is systematic contrastive awareness: students must develop explicit knowledge of the principal syntactic differences between Arabic and Uzbek through structured comparative exercises that highlight the contrast between source and target

structures. The second component is pattern-based translation drills: targeted exercises that develop automaticity in the most frequent syntactic transformations, particularly word order reversal, agreement adjustment, idafa restructuring, and relative clause conversion.

The third component is error analysis and self-correction: students analyze their own and peers' translation errors, classify them according to the contrastive taxonomy, and develop personalized correction strategies. The fourth component is register-differentiated practice: translation exercises calibrated to different text types (literary, journalistic, academic, religious), as the distribution and complexity of syntactic structures varies significantly across registers (Baker, 2018:145). The fifth component is bidirectional training: systematic practice in both Arabic-to-Uzbek and Uzbek-to-Arabic translation, as the syntactic challenges of each direction are distinct and require different competencies.

This framework addresses the limitation of traditional translation pedagogy, which typically focuses on lexical and semantic dimensions while treating syntax as a secondary concern. The empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that syntactic transfer constitutes the most frequent and pervasive category of translation error, supporting the argument that contrastive syntactic analysis should occupy a central position in translation training curricula (Lado, 1957:45).

The aspect and tense system represents another significant area of syntactic divergence. Arabic distinguishes fundamentally between the perfect (past completed action) and imperfect (ongoing or future action) aspects, with tense being derived from context rather than being morphologically primary. Uzbek, by contrast, possesses a rich tense system with distinct morphological markers for past, present, future, and several aspectual distinctions. This divergence means that Arabic temporal reference, which relies heavily on contextual interpretation and aspectual reasoning, must be rendered in Uzbek through explicit tense marking – a transformation that requires the translator to make interpretive decisions about temporal reference that are left implicit in the Arabic original (Holes, 2004:234).

The phenomenon of case marking presents further challenges. Arabic employs a three-case system (nominative, accusative, genitive) with overt case endings on indefinite nouns and partially marked on definite nouns and adjectives. Uzbek, while historically possessing case markers, expresses grammatical relations primarily through

word order and postpositions rather than through nominal inflection. In Arabic-to-Uzbek translation, the information encoded by Arabic case endings must be transferred to Uzbek postpositional phrases and word order – a process that sometimes requires restructuring entire clauses to preserve the semantic relationships encoded compactly by Arabic case morphology (Versteegh, 2014:178).

The practical implementation of the proposed pedagogical framework requires institutional support including the development of specialized teaching materials, the training of faculty in contrastive-based translation pedagogy, and the creation of Arabic-Uzbek parallel text databases that can serve as resources for both teaching and research. The Department of Arabic Translation Theory and Practice at Central Asian universities is ideally positioned to lead these development efforts, as it possesses both the linguistic expertise in Arabic and the contextual understanding of Uzbek-speaking learners that are essential for producing effective pedagogical materials (Rahimov, 2020:78).

The discourse-level implications of Arabic-Uzbek syntactic divergence also warrant consideration. Arabic rhetorical structure relies heavily on complex coordinate and subordinate clause chains connected by conjunctions such as *wa-* (and), *fa-* (and then/so), and *inna* (indeed/verily), producing extended multi-clause sentences that are characteristic of formal Arabic prose. Uzbek rhetorical preferences, by contrast, favor shorter, more discrete sentences with explicit logical connectors and a preference for placing given (known) information before new information. These discourse-level differences compound the challenges of clause-level syntactic restructuring, as the translator must simultaneously manage constituent reordering within clauses and rhetorical restructuring across clause boundaries. Students who develop awareness of these discourse-level patterns alongside clause-level syntactic competence produce significantly more natural and readable translations (Baker, 2018:198).

The contrastive analysis presented in this study also has implications beyond the translation classroom for the broader field of Arabic language instruction in Central Asian universities. Understanding the specific syntactic structures that generate the greatest difficulty for Uzbek-speaking learners enables curriculum designers to allocate instructional time more efficiently, dedicate more practice to high-difficulty structures, and develop targeted remediation materials for common error patterns. The integration of contrastive linguistic analysis into Arabic teacher training programs ensures that future instructors are equipped to anticipate and address the specific challenges that

their students will face, rather than relying on generic pedagogical approaches that do not account for the typological distance between Arabic and Uzbek (Lado, 1957:78).

CONCLUSION

This contrastive analysis has identified word order asymmetry (38.4% of errors), agreement system differences (22.7%), idafa construction divergence (15.3%), and relative clause formation (12.8%) as the four principal syntactic challenges in Arabic-Uzbek translation. Together, these four categories account for 89.2% of all syntactic transfer errors in the student translation corpus, demonstrating the predictive power of contrastive analysis for translation pedagogy.

The proposed five-component pedagogical framework—comprising contrastive awareness, pattern-based drills, error analysis, register differentiation, and bidirectional training—provides an evidence-based methodology for addressing these challenges systematically. The implementation of this framework in Arabic translation programs at Central Asian universities has the potential to significantly improve translation quality and reduce the systematic errors that currently compromise the effectiveness of Arabic-Uzbek professional translation.

Future research should extend this analysis to discourse-level syntactic phenomena (paragraph structure, cohesion devices, information packaging) and investigate the effectiveness of the proposed pedagogical framework through controlled experimental studies. The development of digital tools for automated contrastive analysis of Arabic-Uzbek parallel texts represents a promising direction for scaling the pedagogical applications of this research.

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