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INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES TO PRACTICE AND KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION IN TRANSLATION STUDIES: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN SLOVAKIA AND UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of institutional approaches to integrating theory and practice in translation studies within the higher education systems of Slovakia and Uzbekistan. Focusing on Comenius University in Bratislava, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, the University of Prešov, and Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, the study examines curricular design, pedagogical orientation, technological integration, and professional engagement. The findings highlight both shared foundations in theoretical and linguistic training and significant differences in practice-oriented instruction, use of translation technologies, and alignment with international professional standards.

Keywords

translation studies; translator education; theory–practice integration; Slovak universities; Uzbek higher education; functionalist translation theory; CAT tools; communities of practice; curriculum development.

The Slovak higher education system in translation studies demonstrates both internal diversity and a shared commitment to integrating theoretical knowledge with professional practice. This integration is particularly evident when examining the approaches of major Slovak universities offering translation-related programs, such as Comenius University in Bratislava, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, the University of Prešov, and Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. When compared to the education system in Uzbekistan, these institutions illustrate both converging and diverging models of translator education.

A fundamental similarity between Slovakia and Uzbekistan lies in the acknowledgment that translation competence must be built upon a solid theoretical foundation combined with systematic language training. At Comenius University in Bratislava, translation theory is introduced early and continuously revisited through practical seminars, ensuring that abstract theoretical models are consistently applied to real texts. Similarly, Uzbek universities include translation theory as a core subject, providing students with a structured understanding of equivalence, meaning transfer, and linguistic correspondence. However, while Uzbek programs often treat theory as a separate, largely descriptive discipline, Slovak universities tend to embed theory directly into practice-oriented coursework.

Comenius University in Bratislava (61) represents the most internationally integrated model among Slovak institutions. Its Department of British and American Studies approaches translation as a form of intercultural mediation, emphasizing functionalist theories, discourse analysis, and pragmatic adaptation. The Department of Translation Studies (Katedra prekladateľstva a tlmočníctva – KPT) at **Comenius University in Bratislava (CU)** holds a

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preeminent position in Slovak translatology, tracing its institutionalization from the mid-20th century academic milieu toward its current status as a model of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) alignment. Historically, the department's academic framework was shaped by the highly influential **Slovak structuralist tradition**, featuring foundational theoretical work by scholars like **František Miko** and **Anton Popovič** on concepts such as **stylistic transposition** and **metatext**, moving the discipline beyond mere linguistic equivalence. The Department of British and American Studies at Comenius University already offered courses relating to T&I studies in the interwar period. The true breakthrough, however, came in 1970 at the University of 17 November with the establishment of the Institute of Translation and Interpretation, which focused on modern languages and took on broad modern trends in T&I instruction. This department was later transferred to Comenius University once the University of 17 November was dissolved. The legacy of the institute still persists, as it enabled a similar development in other universities that form the research subject of this paper, and this institute may well be considered the precursor of current trends in T&I instruction in Slovakia. Practical translation courses are closely aligned with professional standards, frequently involving authentic legal, institutional, and EU-related texts. Knowledge integration is achieved through mandatory justification of translation strategies, peer review, and revision stages. In contrast, Uzbek universities typically prioritize correctness of the final translated product, with less emphasis on reflective commentary or process-oriented evaluation.

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (56) demonstrates a balanced approach between theory and practice, particularly in teacher-training and translation programs. Its translation curriculum places strong emphasis on stylistics, text typology, and comparative linguistics, which are then applied in practical translation workshops. While professional translation environments are simulated, the focus remains partly academic. This approach shares similarities with Uzbek institutions, where stylistic and linguistic analysis plays a central role. The key difference lies in the Slovak context's stronger encouragement of applied research and gradual exposure to professional translation norms.

The University of Prešov (26) adopts a more philological and culturally oriented approach to translation studies. Translation practice is often integrated with literary studies, cultural history, and discourse analysis. Students are encouraged to view translation as a cultural act rather than purely a technical skill. This approach resembles certain Uzbek programs that emphasize literary translation and cultural fidelity. However, unlike in Uzbekistan, the University of Prešov systematically connects these cultural perspectives with modern translation theory, ensuring that students develop both interpretative depth and methodological awareness.

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (40) places particular emphasis on applied linguistics and didactics, with translation practice closely linked to language pedagogy and communication studies. Practical translation courses are designed to reinforce theoretical concepts such as functional equivalence, text coherence, and register variation. Knowledge integration is achieved through project-based assignments and collaborative tasks. In Uzbekistan, similar integration exists in pedagogical universities; however, Slovak programs more consistently incorporate contemporary translation studies research and European methodological standards.

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The integration of translation technologies represents another significant point of divergence. Slovak translation programs place strong emphasis on the use of computer-assisted translation tools, including translation memory systems, terminology management software, alignment tools, and quality assurance applications. Students are also introduced to post-editing of machine translation, reflecting current trends in the translation industry. In contrast, Uzbek programs provide more limited exposure to translation technologies, with a stronger focus on manual translation skills. Although awareness of CAT tools is increasing in Uzbekistan, their systematic inclusion in academic curricula remains underdeveloped. From this point we can say that notable difference between Slovak and Uzbek institutions lies in the integration of translation technologies. All four Slovak universities systematically introduce students to computer-assisted translation tools, terminology management, and digital resources, albeit with varying intensity while Comenius University leads in this area, offering structured CAT tool training aligned with industry practices, while the other institutions integrate technology more gradually. In Uzbekistan, CAT tools are still often treated as supplementary rather than integral components of translation training.

Despite these differences, a shared similarity across all institutions is the recognition that translation competence develops progressively through repeated exposure to texts, guided practice, and feedback. For example, the St. Jerome Days, organized by the Slovak Association of Translators and Interpreters in collaboration with Comenius University, annually bring together hundreds of students with practising professionals, employers, and key industry stakeholders.

The **"Future-Proofing Translators and Interpreters"** project defines several strategic objectives aimed at advancing translation and interpreting education in Slovakia. One of the primary goals is **innovative curriculum development**, designed to address the evolving needs of translators and interpreters by integrating technological competencies with essential transversal skills. This initiative builds on existing practices in Slovakia, where academic staff collaborate with representatives of employers and students in shaping university curricula. Having successfully implemented this initial phase, the project seeks to expand these structures by involving a broader range of industry stakeholders and student representatives.

Another key objective is the creation of a **Knowledge Platform for Language Professionals**, envisioned as an interactive online environment that supports learning, collaboration, and the exchange of best practices. This platform aims to facilitate sustained interaction among students, academic staff, and industry professionals, drawing inspiration from established initiatives such as the **Knowledge Centre for Interpreting** operated by **DG SCIC**. Slovak universities formalize this process through internships, professional workshops, academic conferences, and cooperation with translators' associations. Uzbek universities, while offering fewer institutionalized professional opportunities, similarly emphasize sustained practice and linguistic discipline.

1. In conclusion, Comenius University in Bratislava (61), Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (56), the University of Prešov (26), and Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (40) collectively illustrate a Slovak model of translator education characterized by strong integration of theory, practice, and professional orientation. When contrasted with the Uzbek system, which emphasizes linguistic accuracy and traditional theoretical instruction, the Slovak approach offers a more practice-oriented, reflective, and internationally aligned framework.

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This comparison highlights the value of academic mobility and cross-system learning in enhancing translation theory and practice.

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