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THE ROLE OF COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Arabboeva Ozoda

Student, English Philology Faculty UzSWLU

Group: 2028

Supervisor: **Kuldasheva Shakhnoza**

***Abstract.** The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the use of comparative linguistics to language education, with a focus on teaching foreign languages. The study of language similarities and differences, or comparative linguistics, provides important insights that can improve teaching strategies. Teachers can create more effective teaching strategies that accommodate linguistic diversity and promote language acquisition by looking at phonetic, grammatical, and lexical comparisons.*

Key words. Comparative Linguistics, Language Education, Teaching Foreign Languages, Similarities and Differences, Diversity, Communication.

Introduction. Comparative linguistics is all about exploring how languages are similar and different. It's like solving a puzzle, finding patterns between words, sounds, and grammar rules. By understanding these connections, language teachers can unlock better ways to help students learn. The field of comparative linguistics, rooted in centuries of linguistic inquiry and scholarship, is characterized by its systematic examination of the similarities and differences between languages. From the ancient Sanskrit grammarians to the 19th-century pioneers of historical linguistics, scholars have endeavored to uncover the underlying structures and relationships that connect languages across time and space. This historical trajectory reflects a fundamental human curiosity about language and its diversity, as well as a recognition of the practical implications of linguistic knowledge for communication and cultural exchange. In light of these considerations, this thesis seeks to explore the role of comparative linguistics in teaching foreign languages. By examining the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and practical implications of comparative linguistic approaches, this study aims to elucidate how educators can harness the insights of comparative analysis to create more dynamic, effective, and culturally responsive language learning experiences. Through a synthesis of scholarly research, pedagogical insights, and real-world applications, this thesis endeavors to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding language education and pedagogical innovation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Comparative linguistics has its roots in ancient inquiries into the origins and structures of languages, with early civilizations pondering the nature of language and its variations. However, it wasn't until the Renaissance and the Enlightenment that systematic comparative studies began to emerge. Scholars like Sir William Jones in the late 18th century noted similarities between Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, laying the groundwork for comparative linguistics. In the 19th century, figures such as Franz Bopp, Jacob Grimm, and Rasmus Rask developed systematic

methods for comparing languages and establishing the principles of historical linguistics. Their work led to the formulation of Grimm's Law and other fundamental principles of linguistic evolution. Throughout the 20th century, comparative linguistics expanded its scope to include non-Indo-European languages, facilitated by advancements in linguistic typology, anthropological linguistics, and computational methods. Today, comparative linguistics continues to evolve, incorporating interdisciplinary insights from genetics, archaeology, and cognitive science to unravel the complexities of language evolution and diversity. Comparative linguistics plays a vital role in teaching foreign languages by helping learners understand the similarities and differences between their native language and the target language.

Comparative linguistics helps learners become cognizant of the structures, sounds, and patterns present in both their native language and the foreign language they are learning. This awareness aids in grasping new concepts more effectively. By identifying similarities and differences between languages, teachers can anticipate common errors that learners might make based on the structures of their native language. This allows for targeted error correction and guidance. Many languages share cognates, words that have a similar form and meaning across languages due to common linguistic ancestry. Comparative linguistics helps learners recognize these cognates, facilitating vocabulary acquisition. Understanding the grammar of a foreign language in comparison to one's native language can provide valuable insights into the structure and usage of grammatical elements. It allows learners to make connections and apply concepts more effectively. Comparative linguistics aids learners in recognizing and producing sounds that may not exist in their native language. By comparing phonetic and phonological systems, learners can improve their pronunciation and oral communication skills. Comparative linguistics often extends beyond language structures to include cultural contexts and linguistic histories. Learning about the historical and cultural roots of languages can deepen learners' understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Teachers can use comparative linguistics to

develop targeted teaching materials and methods that address the specific needs and challenges faced by learners based on their native language backgrounds. Comparative linguistics research informs the development of language curricula and teaching methodologies, ensuring that language learning programs are effective and relevant to learners' needs.

In conclusion, the role of comparative linguistics in teaching foreign languages is paramount for fostering effective and culturally sensitive language learning experiences. Through systematic exploration of linguistic similarities and differences, comparative linguistics equips educators with valuable insights to tailor pedagogical approaches to the cognitive and linguistic needs of learners. By leveraging these insights, language educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that promote not only language proficiency but also intercultural understanding and empathy. As language education continues to evolve in our interconnected world, integrating comparative linguistic principles into teaching practices will be instrumental in preparing learners to communicate effectively and meaningfully across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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