THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE OF FRENCH-TO-TURKMEN TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This article explores the fundamental grammatical and typological challenges inherent in French-to-Turkmen translation. French, an Indo-European analytic language with SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) syntax, contrasts sharply with Turkmen, an Oghuz Turkic agglutinative language utilizing SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) word order. The core translation process necessitates systematic syntactic restructuring, particularly regarding verbal complementation, the treatment of nominal modifiers (French articles versus Turkmen case/possessive suffixes), and the conversion of prepositions into postpositions. The analysis details the transformations required in sentence nucleus, complex sentence formation (relative clauses), and the encoding of tense/aspect, highlighting the translator's role as a linguistic mediator between two structurally divergent systems.

Keywords: French, Turkmen, Translation, SVO, SOV, Agglutinative, Analytic, Typology, Syntactic Restructuring, Turkic Languages.

The process of translating from French to Turkmen is a complex linguistic operation involving movement between two highly divergent language families and grammatical typologies. French belongs to the Indo-European family, is largely analytic in structure, and employs a rigid Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) syntax. Turkmen, conversely, is an Oghuz language of the Turkic family, characterized by its agglutinative morphology and a consistent Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order.

This profound structural variance means that French-to-Turkmen translation is not merely a lexical substitution but requires fundamental syntactic restructuring at almost every level of the sentence. The primary challenge lies in converting the analytic, head-initial structures of French into the synthetic, head-final structures of Turkmen, demanding the complete reordering of phrases and the conversion of separate grammatical words into bound morphemes. This paper dissects the major grammatical shifts required for successful translation between these two languages, focusing on nominal, verbal, and syntactic structures.

Macro-Syntactic Reordering (SVO to SOV)

The most immediate and pervasive translation challenge is the shift in basic sentence constituent order. In French (SVO), the verb is the second constituent, followed by its complements, making the language "head-initial" (the core element precedes its modifiers or dependents).

French (SVO): *Le professeur* (S) *lit* (V) *un livre* (O). (The professor reads a book.)

In Turkmen (SOV), the main verb is placed at the absolute end of the clause. All objects, adverbs, and subordinate clauses must precede it, making the language "head-final."

Turkmen (SOV): *Professor* (S) *kitap* (O) *okaýar* (V). (Professor book reads.)

Translation Restructuring: The translator must mentally or physically buffer the direct and indirect objects encountered in the French source text until the Turkmen clause-final position is reached. This is particularly challenging in longer sentences where multiple clausal and phrasal complements intervene between the subject and the verb.

The Prepositional/Postpositional Shift

French relies heavily on prepositions (e.g., *à, de, dans*) to express locative, temporal, and relational meanings. Turkmen, like most Turkic languages, uses postpositions, which follow the governed noun.

French (Prepositional): *Je vais* **à** *l'école.* (I go **to** the school.)

Turkmen (Postpositional): *Men mekdebe* **gitýärin**. (I school-DAT **am going**.) (Note: Relational meaning is often absorbed by the case marking itself before the postposition is even considered.)

When a postposition is explicitly used:

French: *Il travaille* **avec** *son ami.* (He works **with** his friend.)

Turkmen: *Ol dostunyň* **bilen** *işleýär.* (He friend-POSS **with** works.)

The translation process must invert the order of the relational element and the noun phrase it modifies, moving the French preposition to a Turkmen postpositional position.

Nominal Structures and Determiners

French and Turkmen handle definiteness, reference, and possession in fundamentally different ways, creating significant challenges for nominal phrase translation.

The Problem of Articles

French mandates the use of articles (*le, la, les, un, une, des, du, de la*) to signal definiteness, indefiniteness, and partitive relations. Turkmen possesses no true articles.

French Necessity: *J'aime* **le** *café.* (Generalization) / *J'ai* **un** *stylo.* (Indefiniteness)

Turkmen Absence: *Kofe gowy görýärin.* (Coffee like-I-do) / *Mende galam bar.* (Me-LOC pen exists)

The translator's task is to infer the intended reference (definite, indefinite, or generic) from the French context and encode that information *implicitly* in Turkmen via one of the following methods:

1. **Zero Morpheme (Default):** Relying on context for general or indefinite reference.

2. **Case Marking:** Definiteness can be indicated through the use of the Accusative case (e.g., if the direct object is definite, it takes the Accusative suffix *-ny / -ni*).

3. **Possessive Suffixes:** Possessive suffixes (*-m, -ň, -i*, etc.) often render a noun definite.

4. **Adjectival Insertion:** Occasionally, an explicit demonstrative or numeral (e.g., *bir* 'one', *şol* 'that') must be introduced where a simple French article existed, to ensure clarity.

Encoding Possession and Case

French possession is typically expressed analytically using the preposition *de* or possessive adjectives (*mon, ta, ses*).

French (Analytic Possession): *Le livre* **de** *l'étudiant.* (The book **of** the student.)

Turkmen employs a synthetic, agglutinative structure, using genitive case markers on the possessor noun and possessive suffixes (often called the Noun of Noun or *Izafet* construction) on the possessed noun.

Turkmen (Agglutinative Possession): *Talybyň* (student-GEN) *kitaby* (book-POSS.3SG).

The translation involves replacing the three-word French structure (Article + Noun + *de* + Noun) with a two-word Turkmen structure featuring complex suffixes.

Verbal Morphology and Tense/Aspect

The structural divergence is perhaps most pronounced in the verbal domain, where the analytic French system is mapped onto the highly synthetic Turkmen structure.

Tense, Aspect, and Modality

French relies on auxiliary verbs (*avoir, être*) and separate modal verbs (*pouvoir, devoir*) to express tense, aspect, and modality.

French (Compound Tense): *J'ai mangé.* (I have eaten.)

French (Progressive/Aspectual): *Je suis en train de lire.* (I am in the process of reading.)

Turkmen integrates most of these meanings into the verb stem using a stack of suffixes (agglutination).

Turkmen (Perfect/Aorist): *Men iýdim.* (I ate/I have eaten.)

Turkmen (Present Continuous): *Men okaýaryn.* (I am reading.)

The Translation of Auxiliaries: In translation, French auxiliary verbs and progressive constructions must be systematically analyzed for the precise tense/aspect they convey, which is then fused into the single Turkmen verb form via suffixes (e.g., *-dy* for past, *-ýar* for present continuous, *-ar* for aorist/habitual). The translator must choose the single appropriate suffix based on the often-subtle aspectual distinctions in the French source.

Negation and Interrogation

In French, negation uses separate particles (*ne...pas*) flanking the verb. Interrogation typically involves S-V inversion or the use of *est-ce que*.

French (Negation): *Je **ne** parle **pas**.*

French (Interrogation): *Parlez-vous?*

In Turkmen, negation is a suffix (*-ma / -me*) placed directly after the verb stem, and interrogation is a separate particle (*-my / -mi*) suffixed to the preceding word, typically the verb.

Turkmen (Negation): *Men gürleş**meýärin**.* (I speak-NEG-PRES.1SG.)

Turkmen (Interrogation): *Sen gürleşýärsiň**mi**?* (You speak-PRES.2SG-Q?)

The French structure requires the translator to remove the external negative markers (*ne...pas*) and convert them into the internal negative suffix, while converting the separate interrogative structure into the bound interrogative particle.

Managing Syntactic Complexity

Translation becomes most challenging when dealing with complex French sentences that use subordination and coordination, which must be re-engineered in the Turkic head-final style.

Relative Clauses and Nominalization

French relative clauses are formed using relative pronouns (*qui, que, dont, où*) and typically follow the head noun they modify.

French (Post-Nominal RC): ***L'homme*** qui a écrit le livre ***est là.*** **(The man** who wrote the book **is here.)**

Turkmen does not use relative pronouns in the same way. Instead, it relies on nominalization, where the entire relative clause is converted into a complex adjectival phrase (a participle or converb construction) that precedes the head noun.

Turkmen (Pre-Nominal Adjective): Kitaby ýazan *adam* (The book-ACC wrote-PARTICIPLE man) *şu ýerde.*

The translation process demands:

1. Identifying the French relative clause.

2. Extracting the verb from the relative clause.

3. Converting the verb into a nominalizer (participle).

4. Placing the entire resulting adjectival phrase *before* the head noun.

This transformation requires deep syntactic awareness, as the French structure must be dismantled and rebuilt into its inverse Turkmen equivalent.

Handling Subordination and Adverbial Clauses

French uses subordinating conjunctions (*parce que, bien que, quand*) to introduce adverbial clauses, which can appear before or after the main clause.

French: *[Parce qu'il faisait froid]*, *il est resté.*

Turkmen typically uses nominalized forms (converbs) or case-marked verbal nouns to introduce subordinate concepts, and these clauses almost universally precede the main clause.

Turkmen: *[Sowuk bolandygy üçin]* (Cold because-of), *ol galdy.*

The translation must ensure that the subordinate clause is rendered in its appropriate Turkmen head-final form and is positioned correctly before the main clause, maintaining the language's fundamental SOV structure.

The Translator as a Syntactic Engineer

French-to-Turkmen translation is a rigorous exercise in typological conversion. The process is defined by the necessary shift from an analytic, SVO, head-initial structure (French) to an agglutinative, SOV, head-final structure (Turkmen).

The successful translator must systematically dismantle and re-engineer grammatical units: replacing French articles with contextual implication or case markers; converting French auxiliaries and prepositions into Turkmen verbal and nominal suffixes; and inverting the order of relative and adverbial clauses to precede the head elements they modify. Mastery of this translation direction relies less on simple lexical correspondence and more on the ability to function as a syntactic engineer, bridging one of the most significant structural divides in global linguistics.

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