

**IS LITERAL MEANING ACHIEVABLE IN TRANSLATION, OR IS A
FREE APPROACH BETTER?**

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***Abstract:** This thesis statement examines the strengths, weaknesses, and contexts in which literal and free translation methods should be applied, offering insights into their impact on translation quality.*

To understand literal or free translation, it is important first to define what translation itself entails. The upcoming sections will explore this concept in more detail. Catford explains that translation theory is a subset of comparative linguistics, which examines the specific relationships between languages. There are various translation methods, ranging from literal to free translations. The primary focus of translation theorists is often on the two main approaches: literal and free translation. The sections below will examine these methods in greater detail.

1.Literal translation. Literal translation is the translation that reproduces communicatively irrelevant elements of the source text. This usually happens when the translator copies the source language form on this or that level of the language. It is also known as "word-for-word" translation, aims to preserve the exact wording and structure of the original text in the target language, without deviating from the source language's syntax. Newmark asserts that literal translation is crucial for maintaining the original text's meaning, especially in fields like science and technology where precision is key. However, scholars such as Wilss and Hockett

warn that this approach can lead to unnatural or clumsy language in the target text, particularly when the grammatical structures or idiomatic expressions of the source and target languages differ significantly.

The literal translation approach is problematic for several reasons:

1. It prioritizes the source language (SL) entirely, disregarding the target language (TL) and its unique characteristics.
2. It fails to acknowledge the fundamental differences in grammar between languages, especially when they belong to separate language families. For example, Arabic, a Semitic language, contrasts sharply with English, which is an Indo-European language.
3. Differences in syntax and word order are ignored, which can lead to awkward or inaccurate translations.

Peter Newmark's perspective on literal translation underscores its importance in maintaining the accuracy and core meaning of a text. He places translation techniques on a spectrum, with word-for-word translation at one end and literal translation slightly more flexible, where the focus is on preserving the grammatical structure of the source text and finding its closest equivalents in the target language without altering the fundamental meaning. Newmark asserts that literal translation works best in contexts such as technical or factual translations. However, he also cautions against over-reliance on a rigid, mechanical approach to translation, where the form is overly prioritized at the expense of meaning. Let's see an example in English: "*The cat is on the table.*" If this sentence is translated in literal translation, the result we can see would be: "*Mushuk stolda.*"

In this case, each word in the English sentence directly corresponds to its equivalent in Uzbek, maintaining the original structure and meaning. Literal translation is especially effective in simple, concrete sentences where the syntax of both languages is similar. However, in more complex sentences or when idiomatic expressions are involved, the literal translation may not always sound natural.

2. Free translation. This method involves translating without sticking strictly to the exact meanings of individual words. The translator has more freedom and is

not limited by the literal meanings or standard expressions of words and phrases. They can adjust the translation based on the context or type of text, without following rigid rules, allowing for a more flexible and adaptive approach. There are also supportive and critical opinions by scholars at all time.

Many scholars, such as Eugene Nida and Peter Newmark, argue that free translation, or dynamic equivalence, is especially effective for conveying the overall message and tone of a text, particularly in literary and cultural contexts while Catford is critical of free translation, warning that it can distort the original meaning and lead to a loss of accuracy. However, Nida emphasized that it is more important to capture the meaning than the exact form when translating, especially for texts that include complex cultural or idiomatic expressions. This method focuses on ensuring that the target language flows naturally, rather than strictly following the grammatical structures of the source language. Newmark, too, believes that free translation is vital when literal translations would lead to awkward or unnatural phrasing. In these situations, free translation ensures the original meaning is communicated in a way that sounds natural in the target language. One example will be given to prove the statement:

In English there us: *"It's raining cats and dogs."*

If we translate it with literal translation, the result will be like this: *"Mushuklar va itlar yog'ayotgan."*

This literal translation doesn't work in Uzbek because the idiomatic expression in English has no direct equivalent. A free translation would be: *"Yomg'ir kuchli yog'moqda,"* which captures the meaning of heavy rain without sticking to the literal words. This version is more natural in Uzbek and communicates the intended idea accurately.

Overall, both methods are useful and effective at appropriate situations. However, while word-for-word translation is useful in contexts where precision and accuracy are crucial, such as in technical, legal, or scientific texts, the free translation is often necessary for conveying the overall meaning or tone of the text, especially in literary, cultural, or emotional contexts.

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