

Book Review

Ali Almanna & Juliane House. (2024). *Linguistics for translators*. Routledge. pp. xiv+287. ISBN:978-1-032-13182-5 (hbk). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003228028>

Linguistics for Translators was authored by Almanna and House and published by Routledge (287 pages) in 2024. The book serves as an introduction to linguistics tailored for non-linguists. It connects the application of fundamental issues in linguistics with translation and thus can be employed as a coursebook, particularly for teaching translation. The book begins with a brief overview of how it differs from earlier comparable works such as *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* by Baker (1992, 2011) and *Translation and Language* by Fawcett (1997/2014) which are specifically authored for translators and translation students and *The Study of Language* (Yule, 1985/1996), *A Concise Introduction to Linguistics* (Rowe & Levine, 2022), and *Linguistics for Non-Linguists: A Primer with Exercises* (Parker & Riley, 1994/2010) that are not designed for translators or translation students. The book comprises 12 chapters, each dedicated to exploring a specific aspect of linguistics and its relevance and application in translation.

The book starts with keynotes on aspects that differentiate it in form and content from comparable books and resources. In the introductory chapter, the authors discuss the relationship between linguistics and translation. They explain that until the late twentieth century, translation was primarily regarded as linguistic. Numerous distinguished translation scholars such as Jacobson, Nida, Newmark, Koller, Vinay & Darbelnet, Catford, Fawcett, Baker, and even House were originally translators and (applied) linguists rather than translation researchers. The authors further refer to several prominent translation theories that are grounded in linguistic principles. Among these, Jacobson's (1959) linguistic universalism and determinism, Nida's (1964) theory of equivalence, which he formulated in light of Chomsky's generative transformational model (1957; 1965), or Halliday's systemic functional grammar (1985) (Munday et al., 2022; Pym, 2023). The subsequent 11 chapters offer strategies for overcoming translation challenges by analyzing the source text from various perspectives.

Chapter 2 focuses on phonetics and phonology, highlighting the importance of phonological features when 'form' is emphasized over 'meaning' in discourse. While this understanding is key for training students on the translation of rhythmic texts and poetry, this aspect of linguistics is rarely discussed in other books on translation.

Chapter 3 addresses morphology, advising translators to analyze individual words and morphemes in the 'pre-translation' stage and seek equivalents at larger units only in the 'translation' stage. This knowledge allows translators to deal with structural differences (such as inflections, compounding, and derivations) while maintaining

accuracy and clarity in their work. To support translators as they initiate their professional careers, learning about morphology enhances their analytical skills and prepares them to handle the linguistic and cultural complexities they may face in various translation contexts.

Chapter 4 introduces some non-concatenative morphological and word-formation processes and their relevance to translation. It discusses structural differences between languages, which require translators to pay attention to both form and meaning, as they may not always match. This chapter can offer trainees a deeper understanding of how morphological differences influence language structure and translation precision by familiarizing them with how morphemes and their meanings can shift in translation.

Chapter 5 emphasizes the idea that before translating, translators need to identify syntactic ambiguities, if any, using methods such as tree diagrams, re-ordering, syntactic parsing, transforming, and so on. Since the differences between languages are primarily syntactic, this chapter significantly contributes to translation education.

Chapter 6 highlights how words and meanings may be present in one language and not in others, hence, translators should apply semantic rules to fill the semantic gaps via diagnostic components, semantic analysis principles, and frame semantic rules, among other relevant elements for discussion.

Chapter 7 covers discourse analysis, emphasizing grammatical categories that translators and trans-editors should consider when manipulating and influencing narrative direction, especially in media translation. It teaches learners that translation is not always concerned with structural and syntactic differences but also with discursive and textual ones.

Chapter 8 focuses on pragmatics, highlighting the need to account for contextual meaning and cultural specificity. Pragmatics is a topic to which trainees rarely pay attention, hence, educators are expected to attract their attention when translating texts. It is emphasized in this chapter that educators need to raise translators' awareness of the many layers embracing texts so that they can actively identify and transfer pragmatic determinants of texts. Being aware of pragmatics and its importance in translation helps translators uncover the hidden pragmatic features and differences between languages.

In Chapter 9, the authors discuss a relevant field in translation – functional linguistics. As the authors put it, for a translation to be functional, translators should appeal to functional elements, including register (field, tenor, and mode), genre, ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, textual meaning, cohesion, and its components. This chapter also deals with House's translation quality assessment model, which embraces some of the above-mentioned functional elements. Translation educators are expected to teach their trainees how text production should primarily have the same function as the original text unless otherwise commissioned by the client.

Chapter 10 discusses the relevance of sociolinguistic theories within translation practice. The authors identify four key social agents involved in translation: source

culture sender, commissioner, translator, and target culture receiver, each with their own identities that may be in conflict. They further emphasize the importance of considering social dimensions to maintain the original text's register.

In Chapter 11, the (un)translatability of dialects, accents, and style are discussed. Thus, translators can use a variety of local strategies when they face any difficulty in translating dialects, accents, and styles. Additional topics are also reviewed, including audience type, norms, expectations, acceptability, as well as language variation and their translation.

Chapter 12 addresses cognitive linguistics, emphasizing human cognitive abilities, including attention distribution, image schemas, perception, scope of attention, profile selection, and the balance between foregrounding and backgrounding in attention, which need to be considered by translators to create a similar mental image of the source text for target language readers.

The book *Linguistics for Translators* makes a significant and applicable contribution due to several key factors. Firstly, translation practice and translation education were traditionally rooted in linguistics. As noted earlier, until the late twentieth century, translation was primarily regarded as a linguistic act. Several prominent theories of translation were grounded in linguistic principles. This book effectively addresses this crucial linguistic-based aspect of translation, which is relevant to translation practice and education.

Another noteworthy aspect of the *Linguistics for Translators* relates to the sections called 'connecting the dots' where the principles of linguistics are connected with translation practice and education. Providing multiple examples in different languages, including German, Arabic, Kurdish, Swahili, French, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Persian, and Chinese, hence expanding the scope of its readers, and providing them with illustrative examples, recommended readings, resources, exercises, and discussion is another significant aspect of this book.

The book *Linguistics for Translators*, as the title implies, focuses on the relationship between translation and linguistics; however, this emphasis on purely linguistic elements limits its applicability to translators who see translation solely as a linguistic process. It is noticeable that in the contemporary post-linguistic phase of translation studies, translation is no longer viewed as just a linguistic task but rather as an activity that is cultural, ideological, sociological, and philosophical, functioning as a cultural, sociological, political, and ideological act. By transcending the boundaries of linguistics, this role of translation has established it as a significant influence in the modern world, altering the ethical and cultural values of both the source and target cultures, shaping ideologies and political stances of the nations involved, as well as transforming the literary and sociological dimensions of texts within the target culture (Munday, et al. 2022).

Nevertheless, it is not without limitations. Various other linguistic aspects encompassing audiovisual translation, machine translation, and AI-based translation and editing, which are increasingly necessary in today's world, are often overlooked in the discussions prompted by this book regarding translation practice.

Overall, *Linguistics for Translators* is an exemplary resource, particularly beneficial for individuals lacking formal academic training in linguistics who aspire to enter the translation market within a linguistic framework. It is equally valuable for translation students, educators, and researchers who recognise that a robust understanding of linguistics is essential for effective translation, particularly from a linguistic viewpoint. This text may serve as a foundational resource for teaching courses related to linguistics and translation, applied linguistics in translation, and practical translation courses aimed at both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Translation Studies, Linguistics, and Modern Languages. As translation is a growing field of practice on a global scale in industry, researchers both in Translation Studies and Linguistics may like to delve deeper into the fundamental discussions of the book and discern how it could be promoted and linked with more recent scopes, such as translation technology in general, translation corpora, the use of AI in translation, translation memory software and the like in potential forthcoming versions of the book.

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Sanatifar, S., & Javedsokhan, P. (2025). [Review of book: *Linguistics for translators*, by A. Almanna & J. House]. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl202521>

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