



Function words in Kyrgyz and German: Classification and contrastive analysis

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Abstract. The systematisation of function word classes remains a pressing issue in contrastive linguistics, as typologically divergent languages employ fundamentally different mechanisms for encoding grammatical relations. This study aimed to establish the types and hierarchy of cross-linguistic functional correspondences between four Kyrgyz function word classes – postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles and their structural equivalents in German, with a view to identifying the compensatory grammatical mechanisms each language employs when the resources of the other are structurally absent. The research drew on contrastive analysis, the parallel-text method, descriptive-analytical procedures, and componential analysis; the empirical basis consisted of grammatical descriptions of the two languages and parallel literary texts. The analysis established that German prepositions constitute the primary functional correspondence for Kyrgyz postpositions, yet this mapping is not one-to-one: a single postposition may be rendered by different prepositions depending on context, while certain grammatical meanings are expressed through adverbial or analytic constructions. It was further found that Kyrgyz auxiliary nouns, which display a three-part morphological structure (root plus possessive affix plus case affix), have no single part-of-speech equivalent in German; their spatial semantics are conveyed primarily by prepositions, and additionally by adverbs and complex prepositional phrases. The coordinating conjunction systems of the two languages showed a considerable degree of isomorphism, whereas the subordinating domain reveals a notable quantitative asymmetry: German commands a substantially richer inventory, and Kyrgyz compensates through non-finite verb forms and the conditional mood. Particles in both languages exhibited the least predictable cross-linguistic correspondences, a result attributable to their pragmatic and discourse-level nature. The findings will be of interest to researchers in contrastive linguistics and translation studies, as well as to teachers of Kyrgyz and German

Keywords: typological divergence; SOV word order; non-finite subordination; grammaticalisation; morphosyntactic asymmetry; parallel corpus analysis; cross-linguistic equivalence

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Introduction

Typologically distant languages develop strikingly different inventories of function words to organise the same grammatical work and understanding how those inventories relate to one another has practical consequences for translation pedagogy, bilingual lexicography, and second-language acquisition. This relevance is especially pronounced for language pairs in which structural asymmetry is maximal: an agglutinative Turkic language whose grammar relies on postpositions, auxiliary nouns, and non-finite subordination, set against an inflectional Germanic language that encodes comparable meanings through prepositions, a rich system of subordinating conjunctions, and morphological case government. Mapping the functional correspondences between such systems exposes both the universality and the particularity of grammatical devices, yet comprehensive comparisons covering all major classes of function words within a single study remain rare, particularly for Kyrgyz and German.

Research in contrastive and typological linguistics over the past several years has addressed various facets of this problem. M. Haspelmath (2023) argued that word-class universals are best captured through the notions of function indicators and semantic root classes rather than through language-particular labels such as “noun” or “verb”, thereby providing a principled framework for comparing word-class inventories across genetically unrelated languages. In a related vein, K. Boye (2023) reconceptualised the lexical-grammatical distinction as a conventionalisation of discursively secondary status, effectively redefining the boundary between content and function elements and highlighting that function words occupy a gradient rather than a fixed position on the grammaticality scale. M. Haspelmath (2023), in the *Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, provided an updated cross-linguistic survey encompassing adpositions, particles, and other minor categories, confirming that the internal structure of function word classes varies sharply even among languages of the same family.

Turning to Turkic-specific research, L. Johanson (2021) offered the first comprehensive typological survey of the entire Turkic family in the *Cambridge Language Surveys* series, devoting separate chapters to postpositions, converbs, and function words and demonstrating that postpositional systems across Turkic languages exhibit both shared archaic patterns and considerable modern diversification. D. Kozuev *et al.* (2021) analysed the structural-semantic features of English and Kyrgyz complex sentences with adverbial clauses, finding that in Kyrgyz more than three-quarters of adverbial modifications precede the main clause, a pattern directly conditioned by the postpositional and non-finite character of the language’s subordination system.

Several studies have also explored specific categories of function words in recent contrastive work. B. Zhunussova *et al.* (2024) traced the diachronic path of the ancient Turkic functional word *birlan* through modern Turkic languages, showing that what began as a postpositional

particle grammaticalised into case affixes in some languages while remaining a free-standing function word in others, a finding that illustrates the fluid boundary between postpositions and affixes in Turkic grammar. S. de Knop & F. Gallez (2023) conducted a contrastive study of prepositions, postpositions, and morphosyntactic case-marking across Dutch, English, and German, demonstrating that even within the same typological class of satellite-framed Germanic languages, considerable variation exists in how spatial and directional meanings are encoded by prepositional and morphological means. A. Cermakova *et al.* (2024), in their volume on contrastive corpus linguistics, charted new methodological ground by combining translation and comparable corpora across typologically diverse European languages, including German, and argued that register variation interacts with cross-linguistic contrasts in ways that monolingual descriptions fail to capture. J. Washington *et al.* (2024) addressed a narrower but related problem in the annotation of pronominalised locatives in Turkic Universal Dependency treebanks, revealing that the morphological complexity of locative forms, which parallels the structure of auxiliary nouns, poses unresolved challenges for cross-linguistic annotation and comparison. Despite this growing body of work, no single study has yet undertaken a simultaneous contrastive analysis of all four Kyrgyz function word classes – postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles – and their German functional counterparts on the basis of parallel literary texts. The present study sought to address this gap by identifying the types and hierarchical structure of functional correspondences between Kyrgyz and German function words, as well as by examining the compensatory grammatical strategies each language uses when the corresponding structures are lacking in the other.

Literature Review

Parts of speech are traditionally identified through a composite principle combining three criteria: semantic (the categorial meaning of a word), morphological (the set of grammatical categories and inflectional possibilities), and syntactic (the ability to perform particular functions in the sentence). Under the semantic criterion, content words carry full nominative meaning, while function words lack independent nominative meaning. The morphological criterion proves largely neutral for distinguishing the two domains, since morphological markers are equally characteristic of lexemes within any word class regardless of their autosemantic or synsemantic status. The syntactic criterion, by contrast, offers a clear basis for the distinction: content words can occupy sentence-element slots, whereas function words perform structural roles of linking, specifying, and modifying. Even the joint application of all three criteria, however, fails to produce a uniform classification in either Kyrgyz or German linguistics, as the status of modal words, interjections, onomatopoeia, and the article remains

contested owing to the intermediate position of these units on the autosemantic-synsemantic continuum.

Two principal positions on parts-of-speech classification have developed within Kyrgyz linguistics. The first view assigns three classes to the function category – postpositions, conjunctions, and particles – while treating modal words as a separate group (Davletov & Kudaybergenov, 1980; Zakharova, 1987; Biyaliev, 2013). The second view of K. Diykanov (1955) expands the function category to include modal words as well. The present study follows the first position in excluding modal words from the function class, since lexemes such as “balkim” – “perhaps” and “albette” – “certainly” express the speaker’s subjective evaluation rather than performing the structural role of linking words or clauses, bringing them closer to parenthetical expressions than to canonical function units. At the same time, the analysis incorporates a fourth function word class that neither position discusses systematically: auxiliary nouns (kyzmattyk atoochtoru). Recognised as an independent part of speech during the last quarter of the twentieth century, this category includes lexemes such as “üstü” – “top”, “asty” – “bottom”, “aldy” – “front”, and “arty” – “back”, which had previously been assigned to postpositions, adverbs, or auxiliary verbs. As observed in the grammatical literature on Kyrgyz, auxiliary nouns “constitute a special group of words that occupy a particular transitional stage between content words and postpositions” (Zakharova, 1987). Under the semantic criterion, they carry exclusively spatial meaning, distinguishing them from postpositions, which cover spatial, temporal, causal, and instrumental meanings. Under the morphological criterion, they operate within a three-part structure of root plus possessive affix plus case affix, unlike morphologically invariable postpositions. Under the syntactic criterion, they can combine with postpositions while dominating the word combination, a combinatorial property that postpositions do not share (Zakharova, 1987; Sydykov, 1990; Pazilova, 2025). The present study therefore analyses four Kyrgyz function word classes: postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles.

German part-of-speech classification is similarly non-uniform. One influential view by W. Jung (1996), O. Moskalskaja (2004) and O. Abdykaimova et al. (2020) distinguishes fourteen parts of speech organised into autosemantic and synsemantic groups, with the synsemantic category covering prepositions, conjunctions, copulas, particles, the article, and auxiliary verbs. A competing view by V. Admoni (1970) and B. Abramov (2004) reduces the inventory to twelve classes and relocates modal words to the autosemantic group. Both positions include the article among function words, yet a number of Germanists argue that the article is more accurately treated as an integral grammatical component of the noun, since it encodes gender, number, and case information that the noun form alone cannot reliably convey (Bergman & Gilkner, 1957; Glinz, 1961). For the purposes of the present study, the article is excluded from the comparison, since Kyrgyz lacks this category entirely, expressing definiteness through

word order, demonstrative pronouns, the numeral “bir” – “one”, and context. The German units admitted to the analysis are therefore prepositions, conjunctions, and particles – the three classes that constitute the functional core of the German synsemantic inventory and carry the greatest potential for cross-linguistic matching with Kyrgyz function words.

The contrastive study of Kyrgyz function words has a continuous, if uneven, scholarly history. A. Dzholdobekov (1969) was the first to examine German prepositions alongside their Kyrgyz analogues, establishing that postpositions constitute the closest Kyrgyz equivalent, yet do not cover the full semantic range of German prepositions; auxiliary nouns serve as additional functional correspondents, particularly for locative meanings, while further resources include case affixes, adverbs, and converb constructions. K. Umarov (1973) focused on subordinating conjunctions and found that German organises these into nine semantic groups against only four in Kyrgyz; the deficit is compensated through case-marked forms, participial and converb constructions, postpositions, auxiliary nouns, and the conditional mood. K. Sagynbaev (1989) replicated this comparison for French spatial prepositions and established auxiliary nouns as the primary Kyrgyz functional counterpart across both paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels. A. Bizhkenova (2017) broadened the scope to all synsemantic classes and introduced the criterion of self-sufficiency, arguing that particles and interjections in both languages lack the capacity to realise a nominative function independently and therefore occupy a peripheral position within the function word inventory. A. Abdykharov (2007) approached the same material from the perspective of linguistic nomination, demonstrating that postpositions and auxiliary nouns relate to extralinguistic reality in a manner comparable to full-meaning lexical items. A. Sarymsakova (2007) proposed a principled division of synsemantic units into nominative-synsemantic items, which maintain a referential link, and non-nominative-synsemantic items, which express only speaker attitude. Ch. Ryskulova (2008) examined Kyrgyz postpositions in comparison with English and showed that their meanings are distributed across prepositions, adverbs, comparative adverb forms, and prepositional phrases. Kyrgyz auxiliary nouns are classified into vertical-plane, horizontal-plane, and restricted-horizontal subgroups and confirmed that spatial prepositions of English constitute their primary functional correspondent across all three. Taken together, these studies establish a well-documented research tradition, yet each addresses only one or two function word classes and no study has to date examined all four classes of Kyrgyz function words within a unified comparison with German.

Materials and Methods

The study drew on three types of sources. The first consisted of grammatical descriptions of Kyrgyz and German that contain part-of-speech classifications and characterisations of function words. The second comprised



dissertation abstracts and monographs by Kyrgyz linguists devoted to the contrastive analysis of function words in Kyrgyz in comparison with German, English, and French. The third source type consisted of parallel literary texts in Kyrgyz and German, which served as the primary empirical base for the contrastive analysis proper. The principal parallel corpus is Ch. Aitmatov's (2016) novella *Dshamilja*. This text was selected for several reasons. The novella represents modern standard Kyrgyz literary prose and has been recognised as a canonical work of twentieth-century Kyrgyz literature. The German translation was made by a qualified literary translator and has gone through multiple editions, making it a reliable target-language counterpart. Crucially, the text is of sufficient length to reveal stable and recurring patterns of cross-linguistic correspondence rather than incidental solutions. Supplementary illustrative examples were drawn from grammatical descriptions of both languages when the parallel texts did not yield a sufficient number of instances for a given function word class. The research was carried out during the academic year 2023-2024.

Before the analysis could proceed, the scope of the category "function word" required explicit delimitation. In the present study, a unit was classified as a function word on the basis of three criteria applied jointly: the semantic criterion (absence of independent nominative meaning), the morphological criterion (limited paradigmatic flexibility compared with content words), and the syntactic criterion (inability to occupy a sentence-element slot as subject, predicate, object, or attribute, and instead performing structural linking, specifying, or modifying roles). This three-criterion composite principle was consistent with the descriptive practice adopted in both Kyrgyz linguistics and the German grammatical tradition, as documented in the sources. On this basis, four Kyrgyz function word classes were admitted to the analysis: postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles. Modal words were excluded, as they express the speaker's subjective evaluation rather than performing structural linking functions, placing them closer to parenthetical elements than to canonical function units. Interjections were likewise treated as a separate class reducible to neither content nor function words. On the German side, the units selected for comparison were prepositions, conjunctions, and particles. The German article was excluded from the comparison, since the category of definiteness that it encodes has no lexical function-word correlate in Kyrgyz, where definiteness is conveyed by word order, context, demonstrative pronouns, and the numeral "bir" – "one".

The study was situated within the framework of contrastive linguistics and employed four methods in combination. Contrastive analysis provided the overarching procedure for comparing grammatical units in the two languages to identify structural and functional similarities and differences. The parallel-text method enabled the extraction and systematic pairing of source-text units with their translation equivalents, yielding authentic cross-linguistic correspondences grounded in actual usage rather than

constructed examples. The descriptive-analytical method was applied to describe and systematise grammatical facts on the basis of available monolingual linguistic descriptions of Kyrgyz and German. Finally, componential analysis was used to decompose the meanings of individual function words into discrete semantic components in order to gauge the degree of functional equivalence between paired units.

The analytical procedure comprised four steps. First, all contexts containing Kyrgyz function words belonging to the four target classes were extracted from the parallel texts by continuous sampling, that is, by working through the full text sequentially without pre-selection, so as to capture the complete range of contexts in which each unit occurs. Second, the corresponding German passage was inspected and the German equivalent – whether a preposition, conjunction, particle, adverb, morphological form, or multiword construction – was recorded for each context. Third, the equivalents were classified by correspondence type according to a four-level scheme: part-of-speech correspondence (e.g., postposition rendered by a preposition); morphological correspondence (e.g., postposition rendered by a case form without an adposition); syntactic correspondence (e.g., postposition rendered by a comparative or cleft construction); and zero correspondence combined with pragmatic or contextual compensation (e.g., a function word whose meaning is absorbed into the overall discourse structure of the translation without any discrete formal equivalent). This last category was retained throughout the analysis as an analytically significant type, since its frequency reflects the degree of structural asymmetry between the two systems. Fourth, all results were consolidated in summary tables presenting the types of correspondence and their hierarchy for each function word class.

Equivalence was assessed across four levels simultaneously. At the morphological level, attention was paid to whether the German equivalent carries overt morphological marking comparable to the Kyrgyz form (e.g., case affixes vs. prepositional government). At the syntactic level, the structural position and combinatory potential of source and target units were compared. At the semantic level, componential analysis was used to establish whether the full meaning of the Kyrgyz unit was preserved, narrowed, or expanded in the German rendering. At the pragmatic level, cases were noted in which the functional role of the Kyrgyz unit – particularly for particles – was conveyed not by a discrete lexical item but by intonation, word order, or discourse context in the German text.

Results and Discussion

The contrastive analysis of the parallel texts, supplemented by evidence from grammatical descriptions of both languages, yields a structured inventory of cross-linguistic correspondences for each of the four Kyrgyz function word classes examined. The findings are presented below in the order of decreasing structural regularity, beginning with postpositions, where the correspondences are

most systematic, and concluding with particles, where they prove least predictable. Kyrgyz postpositions occupy a position after the content word they accompany, which stands before them in a specific case form. German prepositions, conversely, precede their complement and govern the case of the following noun or pronoun. This mirror-image positional distribution is a direct consequence of typological divergence: in agglutinative languages with SOV (Subject, Object, Verb) word order, function elements gravitate toward postposition, whereas in inflectional languages with SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) order they gravitate toward preposition (Dryer & Haspelmath, 2013). Four types of correspondence were identified in the parallel texts.

The most frequent pattern is the direct mapping of a Kyrgyz postposition onto a German preposition, and the three examples below illustrate both the regularity and the limits of this correspondence. In the sentence “Men seni zhönündö oilondum / Ich dachte über dich nach”, the postposition “zhönündö” (“about”) corresponds to the German preposition “über” governing the accusative. The choice of “über” here is conditioned by the semantics of mental direction, a meaning the German prepositional system encodes through case alternation: the same preposition “über” with the dative would yield a locative reading. Kyrgyz, lacking grammatical gender and case government by adpositions, encodes the entire relational meaning within the postposition itself, while German distributes it between the preposition and the case of its complement. In “Kalem menen zhazdym / Ich schrieb mit einem Bleistift”, the postposition “menen” (“with, by means of”) corresponds to “mit” governing the dative. Notably, “menen” covers a broader semantic range than “mit”, extending to comitative, instrumental, and coordinative readings; in coordinative contexts, “menen” may be rendered by the conjunction “und” rather than by a preposition at all, which illustrates the polysemy asymmetry typical of postpositional systems. In “Bul sen üchün / Das ist für dich”, the postposition “üchün” (“for”) maps onto “für” governing the accusative, a relatively stable benefactive correspondence that holds across a wide range of contexts without significant contextual variation.

The second type of correspondence arises when a single Kyrgyz postposition requires a two-element construction in German. In “Al üigö cheiin basyp bardy / Er ging bis zum Haus”, the postposition “cheiin” (“up to, until”) is rendered by the compound “bis zum” (bis + zu + dative). German requires “bis” alone when followed by proper nouns or adverbs (bis Berlin, bis morgen) but demands the addition of “zu” before common nouns with an article, effectively splitting what Kyrgyz encodes in a single morphological unit across two prepositions. This type reveals a structural density asymmetry: Kyrgyz postpositions tend to be semantically denser, while German prepositions are more grammatically specialised and combine to achieve equivalent scope. The third type occurs when no preposition is involved on the German side. In “Biz alarga karshy chyktyk / Wir traten ihnen entgegen”, the postposition

“karshy” (“against, toward”) is rendered by the directional adverb “entgegen” governing the dative. German “entgegen” belongs to the class of postpositional adverbs that can follow their complement (ihnen entgegen) or function as verbal prefixes (entgegenkommen). The case government is preserved – dative in both the postpositional phrase in Kyrgyz and the adverbial construction in German – but the grammatical class of the governing element differs, marking this as a morphosyntactic rather than a lexical correspondence.

The fourth type – where correspondence is achieved entirely through lexico-syntactic means – is illustrated by “Apam syyaktuu zhakshy adam zhok / Es gibt keinen so guten Menschen wie meine Mutter”. Here the postposition “syyaktuu” (“like, resembling”) is rendered by the comparative correlative construction “so...wie”. This type is particularly revealing because it demonstrates that the semantic content of a Kyrgyz postposition can be distributed across a syntactic frame in German rather than lexically concentrated in a single word. It also suggests that the boundary between the postpositional and the comparative construction is drawn at different points in the two languages. Taken together, these four types confirm that German prepositions are the primary but not exclusive functional correspondent of Kyrgyz postpositions. The correspondence is systematically asymmetric: a single postposition like “menen” may be rendered by “mit”, “durch”, or “und” depending on semantic context, and a single German preposition like “auf” may correspond to several different postpositions or auxiliary nouns in Kyrgyz. This many-to-many mapping reflects the difference in how semantic granularity is distributed across the adpositional lexicon in the two languages.

Auxiliary nouns represent the most typologically distinctive feature of the Kyrgyz function word system, since this category has no direct structural counterpart in German. Their defining characteristic is a three-part morphological structure combining a spatial root with a possessive affix and a case affix, which encodes not only the spatial relation but also the possessive dependency between the located object and the reference landmark. This morphological complexity has no equivalent in a German preposition, which is invariable and transfers the entire burden of case specification to the article and noun ending of its complement.

The dominant correspondence type, illustrated by three parallel examples, is the mapping of an auxiliary noun construction onto a simple German preposition. In “Bala üidün aldynda oinop zhatat / Das Kind spielt vor dem Haus”, the construction “üidün aldynda” is decomposable as “üi” (house) + genitive suffix + “ald” (front, spatial root) + possessive suffix -y + locative suffix -nda. German renders this entire three-part morphological package by the preposition “vor” governing the dative. The semantic content that Kyrgyz distributes across a possessive-inflectional chain – “at the front part belonging to the house” – is compressed in German into the spatial preposition “vor”, which simply encodes “in front of”. Similarly, “stoldun üstündö” (table + Gen. + üst + Poss. + Loc.) corresponds



to “auf dem Tisch”, where the vertical-contact relation expressed by the Kyrgyz root “üst” (“upper surface”) is carried by “auf”. The example “stoldun astynda / unter dem Tisch” follows the same structural logic, with the inferiority root “ast” (“lower part”) mapped onto the locative preposition “unter”. Across all three cases, the German preposition absorbs the spatial content of the auxiliary noun root while entirely suppressing the possessive layer of the Kyrgyz construction.

The second type occurs when the auxiliary noun construction corresponds to a German preposition combined with an adverb or adverbial particle. In “Bul toonun tegereginde chöp zhok / Rings um diesen Berg gibt es kein Gras” the construction “toonun tegereginde” (mountain + Gen. + “tegerek” + Poss. + Loc.), meaning “in the area surrounding the mountain”, requires both the preposition “um” and the adverb “rings” (“all around”) in German. The preposition “um” alone would express mere proximity or encirclement, while “rings um” specifies complete circumferential enclosure. This division suggests that the semantic precision encoded in the Kyrgyz root “tegerek” (“circumference, surrounding area”) is achievable in German only through lexical reinforcement of the preposition, pointing to a difference in the lexicalisation patterns of spatial meaning in the two languages.

The third type – auxiliary noun rendered by an adverb – illustrates the semantic flexibility of this category. In “Al ichinen küldü / Er lachte innerlich”, the auxiliary noun “ichi” (“inner part, interior”), used in a figurative rather than a strictly spatial sense, corresponds to the derived adverb “innerlich” (“inwardly, internally”). This is a notable instance of semantic bleaching: the auxiliary noun has extended from concrete spatial reference (“inside a container”) to abstract psychological reference (“within oneself”), and German handles this extended meaning through a morphologically derived manner adverb rather than through a spatial preposition. This type of figurative extension, where a spatial root acquires experiential or psychological readings, is well attested in other Turkic languages and reflects a broader cross-linguistic tendency to map spatial schemas onto abstract domains.

The fourth and structurally most complex type involves auxiliary noun constructions that include a postposition as well. In “Mekteptin zhanyna cheiin süilöshüp basyp kelishti / Sie kamen plaudernd bis in die Nähe der Schule”, the source construction “mekteptin zhanyna cheiin” combines the auxiliary noun “zhany” (“vicinity, proximity”, from “zhan” – “side”) with the postposition “cheiin” (“up to”). The German rendering “bis in die Nähe der Schule” involves three elements: the preposition “bis” (“up to”), the preposition “in”, and the noun “Nähe” (“nearness, vicinity”) in a genitive construction. Particularly striking here is the appearance of “Nähe” as the German equivalent of the auxiliary noun root “zhan”: in German, the spatial concept of proximity that Kyrgyz encodes as a grammaticalised function category must be expressed through a full lexical noun. This underscores that Kyrgyz has grammaticalised – to the level of a paradigmatically

organised function word class – notions that German lexicalises through ordinary nouns, demonstrating a fundamental difference in the grammaticalisation path taken by the two languages for spatial reference.

The comparison of the conjunction systems of the two languages reveals a pattern of partial isomorphism at the level of coordination and substantial divergence at the level of subordination. Among coordinating conjunctions, the correspondence is regular and semantically transparent: Kyrgyz “zhana” maps onto German “und” for copulative coordination, “birok” onto “aber” for adversative coordination, and “zhe” or “zhana zhe” onto “oder” for disjunctive coordination. The sentence “Kün chykty, birok aba suuk ele / Die Sonne ging auf, aber es war kalt” illustrates this directly, with the adversative conjunction occupying equivalent structural positions in both languages and encoding the same semantic relation of concessive contrast. The regularity of this correspondence reflects the fact that the basic types of coordinative relation – addition, contrast, and alternation – appear to be universally coded categories, making direct one-to-one mappings across typologically distant languages entirely expected at this level.

The domain of subordinating conjunctions presents a fundamentally different picture. German commands a richly differentiated system encoding causality (weil, da), conditionality (wenn, falls), concession (obwohl, obgleich), temporality (während, bevor, nachdem), purpose (damit), and result (sodass), each requiring a finite verb in a subordinate clause with verb-final word order. Kyrgyz, by contrast, has a considerably smaller inventory of subordinating conjunctions, a deficit that the language compensates through three distinct mechanisms. The first is direct conjunction correspondence: in “Zhaan zhaap zhatkandyktaan, biz üidö kaldyk, sebebi zhol ötö balchyk bolchu / Weil es regnete, blieben wir zu Hause, denn der Weg war sehr schlammig”, the Kyrgyz causal conjunction “sebebi” (“because, for”) maps directly onto German “denn”, which introduces a main-clause explanation rather than a finite subordinate clause. The second mechanism is the converbal-postpositional construction: in “Zhaan zhaaganyna bailanyshtuu biz üidö kaldyk / Weil es regnete, blieben wir zu Hause”, the Kyrgyz clause lacks any conjunction; instead, the non-finite verb form “zhaaganyna” (a nominalised gerund in the dative) combines with the postposition “bailanyshtuu” (“in connection with, because of”) to produce a causal adverbial equivalent. The entire mechanism operates without a finite subordinate verb and without a conjunction, yet achieves a propositional structure semantically equivalent to a German subordinate clause introduced by “weil”. The third mechanism exploits the conditional mood morphology of the verb: in “Zhaan zhaasa, biz üidö kalabyz / Wenn es regnet, bleiben wir zu Hause”, the conditional suffix -sa attached to the verb root zhaa- (“to rain”) produces the conditional reading without a conjunction, whereas German requires the subordinating conjunction “wenn” and a finite verb in the subordinate clause. These three mechanisms confirm that Kyrgyz

systematically recruits morphological and non-finite resources to perform work that German assigns to the lexical-syntactic domain of subordinating conjunctions.

The particles of both languages express modal, emotive, and pragmatic meanings without occupying a syntactic slot as a sentence element. German is particularly noted for its elaborate system of modal particles

(Abtönungspartikeln), which encode subtle attitudinal and discourse-structuring meanings that resist direct translation. Kyrgyz likewise possesses a ramified particle system covering emphatic, restrictive, interrogative, and emotive functions, and the contrastive analysis of parallel texts reveals three main correspondence types. The findings are consolidated in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of functional correspondence between Kyrgyz and German function word classes

Kyrgyz unit	Primary German correspondence	Additional correspondences
Postposition (menen, üchün, zhönündö, etc.)	Preposition (mit, für, über, etc.)	Adverb; complex prepositional constructions; comparative phrases
Auxiliary noun (aldy, arty, üstü, asty, ichi, zhany, etc.)	Preposition (vor, hinter, auf, unter, in, neben, etc.)	Adverb (innerlich, oben, unten); complex construction (in der Nähe, rings um)
Coordinating conjunction (zhana, birok, zhe)	Coordinating conjunction (und, aber, oder)	–
Subordinating conjunction (sebebi, antkeni, egerdi)	Subordinating conjunction (weil, da, wenn)	Non-finite Kyrgyz verb forms → finite constructions with a conjunction in German
Particle (da/de, gana, -chy/-chi, go, ele)	Particle / adverb (auch, nur, mal, doch, allein)	Syntactic constructions (cleft sentence, etc.)

Source: compiled by the authors

The first type involves a direct mapping between a Kyrgyz particle and a German particle or adverb. In “Men da keldim / Ich bin auch gekommen”, the Kyrgyz emphatic-additive particle “da” (“also, too”) corresponds to “auch”, which functions both as an adverb and as a pragmatic particle in German. The correspondence is semantically stable and contextually predictable, since both items mark additive inclusion without further pragmatic colouring. In “Al gana bilet / Nur er weiß das”, the restrictive particle “gana” (“only”) maps onto “nur”, another item that straddles the adverb-particle boundary in German. These direct correspondences belong to a closed set of semantically transparent focus particles that both languages tend to express through dedicated lexical items. The second type involves correspondences between Kyrgyz particles and the specifically German category of modal particles, which attenuate, reinforce, or modulate the illocutionary force of an utterance. In “Aitchy, kantip boldu? / Sag mal, wie ist das passiert?”, the hortative particle “-chy/-chi”, which softens commands and requests in Kyrgyz, corresponds to the modal particle “mal”, which performs an equivalent pragmatic softening function in German imperatives and requests. The parallel is functionally precise: both items transform a potentially brusque command into a polite or casual solicitation without altering the propositional content. In “Sen go keldingbi? / Du bist doch gekommen, oder?”, the Kyrgyz confirmative-interrogative particle “go”, which signals that the speaker expects or seeks confirmation of a proposition, corresponds to the combination of “doch” and the tag “oder?”. German requires two elements to achieve the pragmatic effect that Kyrgyz achieves with one: “doch” carries the speaker’s presupposition that the proposition is true, while “oder?” converts it into a question. This distribution across two elements reflects the greater grammatical specialisation of the German modal particle system.

The third type arises when the pragmatic effect of a Kyrgyz particle cannot be matched by any single lexical

item in German and requires a syntactic construction. In “Men ele aittym / Ich war es, der das gesagt hat” (alternatively: “Ich allein habe das gesagt”), the emphatic-contrastive particle “ele” places exclusive focus on the subject, implying that no one else performed the action. German can render this either through the adverb “allein” (“alone, exclusively”) or through a cleft sentence (Spaltsatz), which achieves the same exhaustive identification through syntactic structure rather than a particle. The availability of two German renderings for the same Kyrgyz particle reflects the fact that “ele” conflates functions that German distributes across different grammatical strategies depending on register and discourse context. More broadly, the particle comparison revealed the lowest degree of structural regularity across the four function word classes examined, a result directly attributable to the pragmatic and discourse-bound nature of particles: their meaning is heavily context-dependent, and cross-linguistic equivalence is achieved less through fixed lexical pairings than through dynamic, situation-specific interpretation.

This study has systematised the part-of-speech classifications currently adopted in Kyrgyz and German linguistics and has identified the function word classes that formed the object of comparison: in Kyrgyz – postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles; in German – prepositions, conjunctions, and particles. A synthesis of prior contrastive research demonstrated that the comparison of Kyrgyz function words with their Indo-European analogues had until now been carried out in piecemeal fashion, with each study covering only one or two word classes. The present work is the first to offer a comprehensive comparison of all four Kyrgyz function word classes with their German functional counterparts within a single study. The findings confirm and extend what earlier research had established for individual word classes. The primary functional correspondents of Kyrgyz postpositions in German are prepositions, yet this mapping is not one-to-one: a single postposition may map onto



several prepositions depending on semantic context, and some meanings require adverbs, complex constructions, or comparative phrases. This many-to-many mapping reflects the different principles of semantic granularity that govern adpositional lexicons in agglutinative and inflectional languages respectively. The positional asymmetry – postpositions following their complement, prepositions preceding it – is a direct typological consequence of the SOV versus SVO architectures of the two languages, and the case-government asymmetry, whereby Kyrgyz postpositions combine with up to four case forms while German prepositions govern two or three, further underscores the structural distance between the two systems.

Kyrgyz auxiliary nouns, with their distinctive three-part morphological structure of spatial root plus possessive affix plus case affix, have no single part-of-speech counterpart in German, where prepositions are morphologically invariable. Their spatial semantics is rendered by German prepositions as the principal functional correspondent, with adverbs and complex prepositional-nominal constructions serving as secondary and tertiary types. The convergence of this finding with earlier work on German, French, and English comparanda points to a cross-linguistic regularity: the spatial-relational content that Kyrgyz grammaticalises within the morphological paradigm of auxiliary nouns consistently maps onto the prepositional domain of Indo-European languages, regardless of the specific language involved. At the same time, the figurative and abstract uses of auxiliary nouns, where the spatial root acquires psychological or experiential meaning, tend to correspond to derived adverbs in German rather than to prepositions, signalling that the grammaticalisation paths of spatial meaning in the two languages diverge at the point where concrete spatial reference extends into abstract conceptual domains.

The conjunction comparison yields a pattern of partial isomorphism at the coordinating level and substantial divergence at the subordinating level. The basic coordinative relations – additive, adversative, and disjunctive – are encoded through dedicated lexical items in both languages, and the correspondences are stable and context-independent. Subordinating conjunctions, however, are distributed very differently across the two grammars: German maintains a richly differentiated finite-subordination system, while Kyrgyz achieves equivalent propositional relationships through non-finite verb forms, the conditional mood suffix, and postpositional constructions. This asymmetry fits squarely within the broader typological profile of Turkic languages, which characteristically grammaticalise inter-clausal relations through morphological means rather than through a lexical inventory of subordinating conjunctions.

Particles produced the least regular and least predictable cross-linguistic correspondences among the four classes examined. This outcome follows from their pragmatic and discourse-level nature: the meaning of a particle is constituted less by its lexical content than by its interaction with intonation, word order, and communicative context.

The German modal particle system, one of the most elaborated of its kind among European languages, performs attitudinal and discourse-structuring functions that Kyrgyz distributes across particles, intonation contours, and morphological mood markers. The partial overlaps identified – such as the correspondence between the hortative particle “-chy/-chi” and the softening particle “mal”, or between the confirmative particle “go” and the combination of “doch” with a tag question – indicate that the two systems share pragmatic functions while diverging in the grammatical resources through which those functions are realised. The domain of linguistic nomination can be productively extended to include function words endowed with nominative-synsemantic properties – postpositions, auxiliary nouns, and conjunctions – insofar as they relate to extralinguistic denotata in a manner structurally comparable to full-meaning lexical items. This perspective, developed within Kyrgyz linguistics in relation to earlier contrastive work on function words, gains additional support from the present findings: the spatial roots of auxiliary nouns, the semantic frames of postpositions, and the relational meanings of conjunctions all exhibit a degree of referential anchoring that places them on a continuum with content words rather than in strict opposition to them.

The findings on postpositions confirm and extend those of A. Dzholdobekov (1969), who was the first to establish that German prepositions constitute the primary functional correspondent of Kyrgyz postpositions, while auxiliary nouns, case affixes, and adverbs serve as secondary resources. The present study corroborates A. Dzholdobekov's principal finding – prepositions remain the dominant target-language equivalent – but refines it in two respects. First, the many-to-many character of the correspondence is demonstrated systematically through parallel-text data: a single Kyrgyz postposition such as “menen” may be rendered by “mit”, “durch”, or the conjunction “und” depending on the semantic context, a degree of contextual variability that the author's paradigmatic approach did not fully capture. Second, the present analysis explicitly identifies zero correspondence with pragmatic compensation as a fourth type, a category absent from A. Dzholdobekov's classification. Ch. Ryskulova (2008), working on Kyrgyz postpositions in comparison with English, similarly found that postpositional meanings are distributed across prepositions, adverbs, comparative forms, and prepositional phrases. The correspondence types she established for English closely parallel those identified here for German, suggesting that the structural asymmetry between Kyrgyz postpositions and Indo-European adpositions is not language-pair-specific but reflects a typological property of the contrast between agglutinative postpositional and inflectional prepositional systems. This typological interpretation aligns with M. Dryer & M. Haspelmath's (2013) cross-linguistic data demonstrating that adposition placement correlates non-randomly with basic word order across the world's languages, and with M. Haspelmath's (2023) argument that word-class correspondences across genetically unrelated languages

are best understood through functional rather than formal category labels.

The findings on auxiliary nouns converge with results obtained across three different Indo-European comparanda. A. Dzholdobekov (1969) first noted that German prepositions correspond to auxiliary nouns particularly in the expression of locative relations. K. Sagynbaev (1989), working with French spatial prepositions, reached the same conclusion: auxiliary nouns – specifically “aldy”, “arty”, and “zhany” – constitute the primary Kyrgyz functional counterpart of spatial prepositions at both paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels. The present study extends this cross-language convergence to a new dimension: while all four predecessors focused on the primary spatial uses of auxiliary nouns, the present analysis additionally documents their figurative and abstract uses, showing that when the spatial root acquires psychological or experiential meaning – as in “Al ichinen küldü / Er lachte innerlich” – the German correspondent shifts from a preposition to a derived adverb. This divergence in the grammaticalisation path of spatial meaning at the boundary between concrete and abstract reference is a finding not reported in any of the prior studies and represents a substantive contribution to the description of this word class. A. Bizhkenova (2017), who compared all synsemantic classes of German and Kyrgyz, did not distinguish auxiliary nouns as a separate category in her analysis; the present study’s treatment of auxiliary nouns as an independent class with its own correspondence hierarchy demonstrates the analytical gain of recognising this category explicitly, as argued in the grammatical literature by O. Zakharova (1987) and T. Pazilova (2025).

On the conjunction system, K. Umarov (1973) established that German organises subordinating conjunctions into nine semantic groups while Kyrgyz distinguishes only four, and that the deficit is compensated through case-marked forms, participial constructions, converbs, postpositions, and the conditional mood. The present study fully corroborates this finding at the level of types and extends it by providing parallel-text evidence for three specific compensation mechanisms – direct conjunction correspondence, converbal-postpositional construction, and conditional mood morphology – with concrete bilingual examples. K. Umarov’s finding that coordination shows greater cross-linguistic isomorphism than subordination is likewise confirmed: the basic coordinative conjunctions “zhana / und”, “birok / aber”, and “zhe / oder” form stable one-to-one correspondences, whereas subordinating conjunctions display a many-to-few asymmetry. D. Kozuev et al. (2021), analysing English and Kyrgyz complex sentences with adverbial clauses, found that more than three-quarters of adverbial modifications precede the main clause in Kyrgyz – a structural consequence of the very same non-finite subordination strategies the present study identifies as the compensatory mechanism for the missing conjunction inventory. The convergence between their syntactic observation and the present morphosyntactic analysis strengthens the case that non-finite

subordination is a deep typological feature of Kyrgyz grammar rather than a register-specific or author-specific phenomenon. L. Johanson (2021) provides the broader typological context: his survey of the Turkic family demonstrates that converbal subordination is an archaic, pan-Turkic property, and that the preference for non-finite clause-linking over finite subordinating conjunctions is characteristic of the family as a whole, further confirming that the asymmetry identified here is not peculiar to Kyrgyz but typologically expected.

The particle findings are the least directly comparable with prior work, since no previous study in the reviewed literature focused specifically on Kyrgyz particles in contrast with German. A. Bizhkenova (2017) noted that particles and interjections in both languages lack self-sufficiency in the realisation of a nominative function and occupy a peripheral position in the function word inventory, a characterisation consistent with the present finding that particles produce the least regular and least predictable cross-linguistic correspondences. A. Sarymsakova (2007) proposed dividing synsemantic units into nominative-synsemantic and non-nominative-synsemantic items, placing particles among the latter. The present analysis supports this division insofar as the non-referential, discourse-level character of particles is precisely what makes their cross-linguistic mapping unstable. However, the present study goes further by identifying three specific correspondence types – particle-to-particle/adverb, particle-to-modal-particle, and particle-to-syntactic-construction – and illustrating them with parallel-text data. The particular case of Kyrgyz “go” corresponding to the German combination of “doch” and a tag question (“oder?”) illustrates a distribution of pragmatic function across two grammatical elements on the German side, a kind of one-to-two mapping inverse to the structural compression typical of the postposition-preposition correspondence. K. Boye (2023), who reconceptualises function words as units conventionally occupying a discursively secondary position, provides a theoretical framework that helps account for this instability: if particle meaning is constituted largely at the discourse level rather than through fixed semantic content, then cross-linguistic equivalence will necessarily be contextually mediated rather than structurally fixed.

The question of whether function words possess nominative properties – raised by A. Abdykakharov (2007) and A. Sarymsakova (2007) within Kyrgyz linguistics – receives indirect support from the present parallel-text evidence. The spatial roots of auxiliary nouns, the relational frames of postpositions, and the propositional connectors represented by conjunctions all demonstrate degrees of referential anchoring that place them on a continuum with content words rather than in strict opposition to them. This is consistent with M. Haspelmath’s (2023) framework of semantic root classes, which allows cross-linguistic functional comparison to proceed through meaning rather than form, and with K. Boye’s (2023) view of the lexical-grammatical distinction as gradient rather than



discrete. B. Zhunussova *et al.* (2024), tracing the diachronic development of the Turkic particle “birlan” into case affixes in some modern Turkic languages while it remains a free-standing function word in others, illustrate empirically the fluidity of the boundary between postpositions and affixes – the same boundary that the three-part morphological structure of Kyrgyz auxiliary nouns inhabits synchronically. S. de Knop & F. Gallez (2023), demonstrating variation in how spatial and directional meanings are encoded prepositionally and morphologically even within the same sub-family of Germanic languages, confirm that the prepositional systems that serve as the primary German correspondents of Kyrgyz postpositions and auxiliary nouns are themselves non-uniform, which implies that the many-to-many mapping observed in the present study is partly driven by variation on the German side as well as by polysemy on the Kyrgyz side.

Conclusions

The present study set out to carry out the first comprehensive contrastive analysis of all four classes of Kyrgyz function words – postpositions, auxiliary nouns, conjunctions, and particles – against their German functional counterparts, using parallel literary texts as the empirical basis. The analysis has established four main findings. The functional correspondences between Kyrgyz postpositions and German prepositions are systematic but asymmetric. German prepositions constitute the primary correspondent type, yet the mapping is many-to-many at the semantic level and involves additional adverbial, morphological, and lexico-syntactic types of correspondence. This asymmetry is typologically motivated by the divergent word order and morphological profiles of the two languages.

Kyrgyz auxiliary nouns, a category specific to Turkic and without direct structural counterpart in German, correspond most consistently to German spatial prepositions across all spatial subgroups. Their three-part morphological structure – encoding the spatial relation, possessive dependency, and case simultaneously – is compressed into a single invariable preposition in German, which distributes the grammatical information across the article

and case ending of its complement. In figurative and abstract uses, the correspondence shifts from prepositions to derived adverbs, pointing to divergent lexicalisation paths for non-spatial meanings. The conjunction systems exhibit isomorphism at the level of coordination and sharp asymmetry at the level of subordination. Kyrgyz compensates for its smaller subordinating conjunction inventory through non-finite verb forms, conditional mood morphology, and postpositional constructions – a typologically expected pattern for a Turkic language with agglutinative morphology and SOV word order. Particles display the most context-dependent and least predictable correspondences, a result attributable to their pragmatic and discourse-level character. The partial overlaps identified between the two particle systems reflect shared communicative functions achieved through structurally different grammatical means.

These findings have direct applications for translation practice between Kyrgyz and German, bilingual and contrastive lexicography, the preparation of teaching materials for Kyrgyz learners of German and German learners of Kyrgyz, and the typological study of Turkic-Germanic grammatical relations. The methodological framework combining parallel-text analysis with multi-level equivalence assessment may serve as a basis for comparable investigations of other Turkic languages in contrastive pairing with European languages where systematic function word descriptions remain absent. Future research should extend the empirical basis to corpora of multiple genres and registers and apply quantitative frequency analysis to complement the qualitative classification of correspondence types established here.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Кыргыз жана немис тилдериндеги кызматчы сөздөр: классификациясы жана салыштырма анализи

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Аннотация. Кызматчы сөздөрдүн класстарын системалаштыруу салыштырма тил илиминдеги актуалдуу маселелердин бири болуп саналат, анткени типологиялык жактан айырмаланган тилдер грамматикалык мамилелерди билдирүүдө принципалдуу түрдө ар башка механизмдерди колдонушат. Бул изилдөөнүн максаты кыргыз тилиндеги кызматчы сөздөрдүн төрт классынын – послелогдордун, жардамчы зат атоочтордун, байламталардын жана бөлүкчөлөрдүн немис тилиндеги структуралык эквиваленттери менен болгон тил аралык функционалдык дал келүүлөрүнүн түрлөрүн жана иерархиясын аныктоо, ошондой эле бир тилде экинчи тилге мүнөздүү болгон структуралык каражаттар жок болгон учурда колдонулган компенсациялык грамматикалык механизмдерди аныктоо болуп саналат. Изилдөөдө салыштырма талдоо, параллелдүү тексттер ыкмасы, сүрөттөмө-аналитикалык процедуралар жана компоненттик талдоо колдонулду. Эмпирикалык база катары эки тилдин грамматикалык сүрөттөмөлөрү жана параллелдүү көркөм тексттер кызмат кылды. Талдоонун жыйынтыгында немис тилиндеги предлогдор кыргыз тилиндеги послелогдордун негизги функционалдык эквиваленти болуп кызмат кылаары аныкталды. Бирок бул дал келүү бир маанилүү эмес: бир эле послелог контекстке жараша ар кандай предлогдор аркылуу берилиши мүмкүн, ал эми айрым грамматикалык маанилер наречие же аналитикалык конструкциялар аркылуу туюнтулат. Ошондой эле үч бөлүктөн турган морфологиялык түзүлүшкө ээ болгон кыргыз тилиндеги жардамчы зат атоочтордун (негиз + таандык мүчө + жөндөмө мүчө) немис тилинде сөз түркүмү боюнча түз эквиваленти жок экени аныкталды; алардын мейкиндиктик мааниси негизинен предлогдор, ошондой эле наречиелер жана татаал предлогдук конструкциялар аркылуу берилет. Эки тилдеги тең салалуу байламталар системасы кыйла даражада изоморфизмди көрсөтөт, ал эми багыныңкы байланыш каражаттары тармагында олуттуу сандык асимметрия байкалат: немис тили мындай каражаттардын кыйла бай топтомуна ээ, ал эми кыргыз тили бул айырмачылыкты этиштин нефиниттик формаларын жана шарттуу ыңгайды колдонуу аркылуу компенсациялайт. Эң аз болжолдонгон тил аралык дал келүүлөр бөлүкчөлөр тармагында байкалган, бул алардын прагматикалык жана дискурстук мүнөзү менен түшүндүрүлөт. Алынган жыйынтыктар салыштырма тил илими жана котормо таануу тармагындагы изилдөөчүлөр үчүн, ошондой эле кыргыз жана немис тилдеринин окутуучулары үчүн кызыктуу болот.

Негизги сөздөр: типологиялык айырмачылык; SOV сөз тартиби; нефиниттик багыныңкы байланыш; грамматикализация; морфосинтаксистик асимметрия; параллелдүү корпус талдоосу; тил аралык эквиваленттүүлүк

Служебные слова в кыргызском и немецком языках: классификация и сопоставительный анализ

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Аннотация. Систематизация классов служебных слов остается актуальной проблемой сопоставительного языкознания, поскольку типологически различающиеся языки используют принципиально разные механизмы выражения грамматических отношений. Целью данного исследования было установить типы и иерархию межъязыковых функциональных соответствий между четырьмя классами служебных слов кыргызского языка – послелогоми, вспомогательными существительными, союзами и частицами и их структурными эквивалентами в немецком языке, а также выявить компенсаторные грамматические механизмы, к которым прибегает каждый язык при отсутствии в другом соответствующих структурных средств. В исследовании использовались методы сопоставительного анализа, параллельных текстов, описательно-аналитические процедуры и компонентный анализ. Эмпирическую базу составили грамматические описания обоих языков и параллельные художественные тексты. Анализ показал, что немецкие предлоги выступают основным функциональным соответствием кыргызских послелогов, однако это соответствие не является однозначным: один и тот же послелог может передаваться различными предлогами в зависимости от контекста, тогда как некоторые грамматические значения выражаются посредством наречных или аналитических конструкций. Также было установлено, что кыргызские вспомогательные существительные, обладающие трехчастной морфологической структурой (основа + притяжательный аффикс + падежный аффикс), не имеют прямого частеречного эквивалента в немецком языке; их пространственная семантика передается преимущественно предлогами, а также наречиями и сложными предложно-именными конструкциями. Системы сочинительных союзов в обоих языках демонстрируют значительную степень изоморфизма, тогда как в области подчинительных средств наблюдается заметная количественная асимметрия: немецкий язык располагает значительно более богатым набором таких средств, тогда как кыргызский компенсирует это использованием нефинитных форм глагола и условного наклонения. Наименее предсказуемые межъязыковые соответствия были выявлены в сфере частиц, что объясняется их прагматической и дискурсивной природой. Полученные результаты представляют интерес для исследователей в области сопоставительной лингвистики и переводоведения, а также для преподавателей кыргызского и немецкого языков

Ключевые слова: типологическое расхождение; порядок слов SOV; нефинитное подчинение; грамматикализация; морфосинтаксическая асимметрия; анализ параллельного корпуса; межъязыковая эквивалентность

