

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND METHODOLOGY OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive study of the theoretical foundations, methodology, and research methods of comparative literature. It extensively covers the objects, objectives, and main stages of comparative analysis, as well as historical-comparative and comparative-typological methods, typological similarities, literary relations, and the role of translation in comparative literature. The article also explores the interplay between Eastern and Western literary traditions, the concept of world literature, and issues of multiculturalism. In the course of the research, the scholarly heritage of academics who left their mark in the field of comparative literature, such as A.N.Veselovsky, V.M.Zhirmunsky, N.I.Konrad, and D.Dyurishin, is analyzed, along with the contributions of G.Salomov, N.Komilov, G.Xalliyeva, and others in Uzbek literary studies. In conclusion, comparative literature serves not only to identify the general and specific aspects between literary phenomena but also to define the place of a national literature within the global literary process.

Keywords: comparative literature, comparativistics, historical-comparative method, typology, literary relations, translation, world literature, multiculturalism, poetics, literary influence

INTRODUCTION

Modern humanities, particularly literary studies, demand a broad and in-depth study of the artistic heritage of the world's peoples. The only discipline capable of fulfilling this task is comparative literature, also known as comparativistics. Comparative literature is a field of study based on the comparison of two or more literary phenomena, serving to identify the common and specific aspects of the artistic thinking of the world's peoples.

In the post-independence period, the importance of comparative research in Uzbek literary studies has grown significantly. The need for national self-awareness, a deep understanding of Eastern and Western cultures, and the study of our classical literature in connection with the global literary process has prepared fertile ground for the development of this field. Therefore, studying comparative literature as an independent discipline and strengthening its theoretical foundations remains one of the pressing issues facing modern scholarship.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical and methodological principles of comparative literature, identify its main approaches and methods, and highlight significant problems in the field and their scholarly solutions. The textbook “Comparative Literary Studies” (Tashkent, 2025) by U.Jo’raqulov, G.Xalliyeva, and A.Qosimov, as well as the works of A.N.Veselovsky, V.M.Zhirmunsky, D. Ćurišin, and other scholars, served as sources for the research.

The scholarly novelty of the article is that it considers the theoretical foundations and methodology of comparative literature as a unified system, analyzes contemporary problems in the field and their solutions, and compares the traditions of Eastern and Western comparativism.

MAIN PART

Comparative studies (Latin: *comparativus* - comparative) is a scholarly field based on the systematic comparison of various processes, encompassing language and literature as well as other areas of knowledge. This term originated in France in the early 19th century, then entered English scholarly discourse, was institutionalized within the German tradition through specialized publications, and was widely introduced into Russian academic terminology through the works of A.N. Veselovsky. (Jo’raqulov U. et al., 2025, 15)

Philological comparative studies includes two main branches: linguistic comparative studies (comparative linguistics) and literary comparative studies (comparative literature). Linguistic comparative studies deals with the comparative analysis of related and unrelated languages. In literary comparative studies, the literary process serves as the central object of study; its subject matter includes various aspects of literary texts such as narrative structure, composition, thematic content, stylistic expression, and authorial individuality.

The theoretical foundations of comparative literary studies began to take shape in 19th-century Europe, and later in Russia. This emerged in response to the need to account for the parallels and distinctions within the scope of literary development. Comparative research first appeared in the field of linguistics and subsequently transitioned to literary studies. European linguists Franz Bopp, Rasmus Rask, and Jacob Grimm played a decisive role in the development of the comparative-historical method. (Veselovsky A.N., 1989, 405)

In the Russian school of thought, the comparative-historical method is closely associated with A.N. Veselovsky. He introduced and developed this concept, emphasizing the necessity of studying literary development in connection with broader social and historical processes. In his view, the history of literature reflects the evolution of social thought, culture, and intellectual life. Veselovsky later consolidated his ideas in “Historical Poetics,” which served as a methodological foundation for comparative literary studies. As M.G. Bogatkina notes, modern comparative methodology continues to rely on the traditions established by Veselovsky’s comparative-historical school. (Bogatkina M.G., 2004, 75)

In Uzbek comparative literary studies, significant scholarly works have also been produced in this field. Scholars such as G. Salomov, F. Sulaymonova, N. Komilov, and B. Qosimov established the foundations of this discipline, while G. Xalliyeva conducted extensive research on the relationship between 20th-century Russian Orientalism and Uzbek classical literature. (Xalliyeva G., 2018, 133–134)

Comparative analysis differs fundamentally from traditional analytical approaches. A traditional analysis typically involves studying a single object to identify its constituent parts.

Comparative analysis expands this process by systematically comparing the components of different objects. The central objective of comparative analysis is to identify the similarities and differences between the phenomena being studied.

The objects of comparative analysis are divided into three categories: natural, social, and spiritual phenomena. Although these domains are closely intertwined, they each maintain a certain degree of independence. In fiction, however, they are transformed into artistic images that create a comprehensive depiction of human life. (Jo'raqolov U. et al., 2025, 36)

Scholarly literature indicates that comparative analysis performs several interrelated functions: epistemological, logical, methodological, empirical, and axiological. In other words, the comparison of literary phenomena is carried out through these functional dimensions.

The epistemological function is aimed at acquiring new knowledge about the objects under study and developing analytical skills. The logical function involves applying the rules of reasoning during the comparison process. The methodological function includes the use of various research methods and techniques. The axiological function, in turn, requires making judgments about the significance and value of literary phenomena through comparative analysis. (Qosimov A. et al., 2019, 88)

For comparative analysis to achieve meaningful results, the researcher must proceed sequentially through several stages. The first stage is selecting the objects for comparison. The second stage is focusing on how these phenomena manifest in a specific context. The third stage is analyzing the relationship between the objects and their environment. The fourth stage consists of identifying the motives that caused the emergence of a particular literary phenomenon. (Kokorin A.A., 2009, 45)

The methodology of comparative literature includes two main approaches: the historical-comparative method and the comparative-typological method. Although they are similar to each other, they serve different analytical purposes.

The historical-comparative method is aimed at studying both the general and specific features of literary phenomena in connection with their historical development. The earliest theoretical considerations related to this approach can be traced back to Aristotle's "Poetics." In modern scholarship, this method is applied in several areas, such as comparing world literature with national literary traditions, studying texts within a specific historical period, and analyzing works created within a national literature. The theoretical foundations of this method were developed by scholars like A.N. Veselovsky, V.M. Zhirmunsky, N.I. Konrad, A. Dima, and D. Dyurishin. (Zhirmunsky V.M., 1960, 183)

The contrastive approach is primarily intended to identify differences between philological phenomena, emphasizing uniqueness rather than sources of similarity. Practical examples of this method are found in Alisher Navoi's "Muhokamat ul-Lughatayn," where the differences between the Persian and Turkic languages were systematically studied. As R. Rasulov notes, the typological method involves comparing two or more literary phenomena without focusing on their historical origins or genetic development. (Qosimov A. et al., 2019, 101)

The evaluation of comparative results is based on several criteria. The historical criterion assesses the correspondence of analytical conclusions with historical truth. The epistemological criterion examines the consistency of the results with the principles of knowledge. The logical criterion evaluates the internal coherence of the conclusions and their adherence to the rules of

reasoning. The methodological criterion considers the selection and application of appropriate research methods. The spiritual-ideological criterion reflects the degree to which conclusions align with the broader cultural and value-based orientations within society. (Jo'raqolov U. et al., 2025, 62)

Poetics is a significant area of research in comparative literary studies. The main objective of poetics is to reveal, evaluate, and demonstrate all the artistic elements that contribute to the creation of a work. The term "poetics" was first used in the works of Aristotle, who divided literature into three main forms - epic, lyric, and drama - and studied them from the perspective of their unique artistic features.

In modern literary studies, there are five primary types of poetics: general, descriptive, normative, theoretical, and historical. As V. M. Zhirmunsky noted, poetics is the science that studies poetry as an art form. His idea that "literary studies develops under the banner of poetics" has not lost its relevance today. (Zhirmunsky V. M., 1977, 15)

Typology is one of the important concepts in comparative literary studies, helping to identify common aspects in the literature of peoples who have no genetic connection and whose language, history, and culture are entirely different. D. Dyurishin recommends studying typological similarities in three types: socio-typological, literary-typological, and psychological-typological similarities.

Socio-typological similarity encompasses the social conditions reflected in the ideological and philosophical content of a work. Literary-typological similarities, on the other hand, are based on purely literary phenomena. In this area, the subjects of comparative-typological research are genre, stylistic direction, ideological and psychological dimensions, the system of characters, and means of artistic expression. Psychological-typological similarities indicate the creator's individual psychological predisposition to create a particular work. (Dyurishin D., 1979, 123)

The monograph by Sh. Sirojiddinov, which studied Alisher Navoi's sources based on a comparative-typological textual analysis, is among the scholarly works dedicated to the analysis of literary-typological similarities. This work demonstrated the typological relationship of Navoi's creative work with the world literary process on the basis of a clear scientific method.

National, regional, and world literature are constantly developing and mutually enriching one another. Literature develops in the world not only within the framework of its own literary traditions but also by drawing upon the advanced experience of other national literatures.

N.I. Konrad interprets literary relations as the process of integrating one nation's literature into another's cultural space and identifies five main forms of interliterary interaction: direct engagement with original works, translation, common themes in different literary traditions, national adaptation, and universal narrative motifs that disseminate across various cultures. V.M.Zhirmunsky, on the other hand, emphasized that the issue of literary relations and influence is a historical category, writing that it manifests itself to varying degrees under different historical conditions. (Zhirmunsky V.M., 1979, 216)

The concept of world literature has historically generated extensive scholarly debate. Its conceptual formation primarily occurred in the 19th century. The term "Weltliteratur," introduced by Goethe, became popular in the 20th century. World literature cannot be reduced to the mere sum of national literatures. As D. Damrosch asserts, literary works enter world literature when they engage with audiences beyond their own cultural sphere.

Multiculturalism also plays an important role in the system of interliterary relations. In terms of its ideological content, multiculturalism is a policy that emerged in the USA during the last quarter of the 20th century, based on the idea of harmonious coexistence of different peoples in multinational states, friendly relations, and respect for each other's culture, history, and literature. When N. I. Conrad compared episodes from "Layli and Majnun" with Tristan and Isolde and The Master and Margarita from Western literature, he was drawing on the ideas of multiculturalism: no nation should be superior to another; the mania for national greatness is as false, harmful, and ridiculous in a nation as it is in an individual. (Jo'raqulov U. et al., 2025, 142)

The study of Eastern and Western literary traditions, and the comparative study of the enormous contribution of our great ancestors - such as Alisher Navoiy, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Mahmud Qoshg'ariy, and Ahmad Yassaviy - to the formation of European culture and philosophy against the backdrop of Western culture, remains a key direction for Uzbek comparative studies in the post-independence period. (Xalliyeva G., 2018, 177)

CONCLUSION

This article extensively examines the theoretical foundations, methodology, and problems of comparative literary studies. The research has led to the following conclusions:

Firstly, the global nature of comparative literature as a discipline, along with its geographical scope and connection to various historical periods, elevates this field to a special place within the modern humanities. The artistic works and intellectual expressions of the world's peoples serve as the primary sources for comparative literary research, and work in this field demands a complex and multifaceted analytical approach.

Secondly, the historical-comparative method and the comparative-typological method are the two main pillars of the methodology of comparative literature. The former studies literary phenomena in connection with their historical development, while the latter serves to identify aspects that are distinct from one another. These methods complement each other, creating a complete scholarly picture of comparative analysis.

Thirdly, the concept of typological similarities makes it possible to identify commonalities in the literature of different peoples even in the absence of a genetic link, and this process plays an important role in understanding the general laws of the development of world literature. The classification of socio-typological, literary-typological, and psychological-typological similarities established by D. Āurišin has not lost its relevance to this day.

Fourthly, translation is one of the most important objects of study within the field of comparative literature, serving as a primary means of not only linguistic but also intercultural communication. Studying translation from a comparative perspective allows for a deeper understanding of issues related to literary influence, reception, and intercultural interaction.

Fifthly, the concept of world literature, multiculturalism, and the critique of Eurocentrism remain among the most pressing issues in modern comparative literary studies. The scholarly approach of N.I. Konrad and other academics, grounded in the idea of multiculturalism, promotes the principle that no single nation should be held superior to another. This principle is becoming even more significant in the context of today's globalization.

In conclusion, comparative literary studies serves not only to identify the common and specific aspects among literary phenomena but also to determine the place of a national literature within the global literary process, to reveal the patterns of literary influence and mutual

enrichment, and to strengthen the dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures. The future development of Uzbek comparative literary studies requires strengthening its theoretical and methodological foundations, training young researchers, and enhancing international cooperation.

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