

CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS AND TEXT LINGUISTICS

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ANNOTATION

This article gives information about Contrastive Linguistics aims to provide students with a wide perspective on this field of linguistic analysis, and also with the tools they need in order to be able to establish comparisons and to contrast English with Spanish or Catalan.

Key words: language, hypothesis, systematic analysis, cohesion coherence, metalingual

CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS

Contrastive Linguistics (CL) is a discipline of Applied Linguistics that first emerged in the United States in the mid-50s, under the influence of structuralism, and as a result of a renovated interest in the teaching of foreign languages. Initially, it sought to contrast pairs of languages in order to determine similarities and differences between them. The hypothesis postulated within this framework was that the systematic analysis of two languages should help predict the difficulties that learners of a foreign language (FL) will encounter when acquiring it.

The base of CL is grounded on the idea, suggested by Robert Lado (1957), that it is possible to identify areas of difficulty for the learners of a foreign language by contrasting their mother tongue (L1) with the language they are learning (L2). The analysis proposed by this author in his influential work (Linguistics across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers) always involved the analysis of at least two languages, that is, a target language (TL) and a source language (SL), even though more languages could be contrasted if required. Difficulties are expected to appear in those areas in which the two languages differ. For that reason, special attention must be paid to difficulties; similarities, on the other hand, are expected to facilitate the learning process.

Lado's work is important because in it he suggested the techniques for contrasting languages. For example, he proposed to search for features of the L1 that do not exist in the L2 at the phonological or morphological levels, in order to create teaching materials that would make students aware of them. At the lexical level, he proposed to study the problems between pairs of words in both languages, taking into account the similarities and the differences in both form and meaning.

The concept known as Tertium Comparitionis is core to Contrastive Linguistics. Making a comparison between two linguistic properties or features, regardless of the language level you are contrasting, presupposes the existence of a common feature that becomes the basis for the comparison. This common feature is called Tertium Comparitionis.

TEXT LINGUISTICS

Text linguistics is the study of text as a product (text grammar) or as a process (theory of text). The text-as-a-product approach is focused on the text cohesion, coherence, topical organization, illocutionary structure and communicative functions; the text-as-a-process perspective studies the text production, reception and interpretation (cf. Dolník and Bajžíková 1998). Text can be understood as an instance of (spoken or written) language use (an act of parole), a relatively self-contained unit of communication. As a 'communicative occurrence' it meets seven criteria of textuality (the constitutive principles of textual communication): cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality, and three regulative principles of textual communication: efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness (cf. de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981, Malmjaer 1991).

Cohesion (see esp. Halliday and Hasan 1976) is the way in which linguistic items of which texts are constituted are meaningfully interconnected in sequences. Cohesion may be of four types: reference, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical organization. Reference (realized by nouns, determiners, personal and demonstrative pronouns or adverbs) either points out of the text to a real world item (i.e., to its denotate), hence exophoric reference (deixis: Can you see that?), or refers to an item within the text, hence endophoric reference. The two possible directions of endophoric reference are backward (anaphoric r.; direct anaphora: I met a man. He was wearing ..., indirect anaphora: It is a solid house. The walls are thick ...) or forward (cataphoric r.:

... the house whose walls are thick); in the case of a reference to an item of which there is (in the given situation) only one instance, we talk about homophora (e.g. Place the books on the table please). The relationship between two items in which both refer to the same person or thing and one stands as a linguistic antecedent of the other is called coreference (compare He saw himself in the mirror with He saw him in the mirror). Ellipsis, i.e., omission of something referred to earlier, is an instance of textual anaphora (e.g., Have some more). Conjunction, enhanced esp. by syntactic (adverbials – subjuncts, conjuncts, disjuncts; pronouns, metalingual connectors, etc.) and grammatical (concord, sequence of tenses) connectors, creates intricate systems of intratextual bonds. Lexical cohesion establishes semantic (through lexical devices, such as repetition, equivalence - synonymy, hyponymy, hyperonymy, paraphrase, collocation) and pragmatic (presupposition) connectedness; in contrast with the previous types of cohesion, it operates over larger stretches of text since it establishes chains of related references.

Coherence, the sub-surface feature of a text, concerns the ways in which the meanings within a text (concepts, relations among them and their relations to the external world) are established and developed. Some of the major relations of coherence are logical sequences, such as cause-consequence (and so), condition-consequence (if), instrument-achievement (by), contrast (however), compatibility (and), etc. Moreover, it is the general 'aboutness', i.e., the topic development which provides a text with necessary integrity; even in the absence of overt links, a text may be perceived as coherent (i.e., as making sense), as in various lists, charts, timetables, menus. Contrarily, other types of texts are characterized by explicit cohesive structure signalling intricate logico-semantic relationships (scientific reports, legal texts); in literary works, cohesion may be programmatically suppressed in order to enhance readers' enjoyment while discovering these links for themselves.

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