

*Any language is able to convey everything.  
However, they differ in what a language must convey.*

Roman Jakobson

## **CHAPTER I: LANGUAGE AND CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS**

### **1.1. Linguistics**

Human languages are systems of symbols designed for the purpose of communication. Linguistics is the study of these knowledge systems in all their aspects (system structure, the use in the production and comprehension of messages, etc.). It is the scientific study of the nature, structure, and variation of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics.

The field of linguistics can be divided into several subfields: general and descriptive linguistics, theoretical and applied linguistics, microlinguistics and macrolinguistics. Contrastive linguistics is a branch of linguistics that describes the similarities and differences among two or more languages at such a level as phonology, grammar and semantics, especially in order to improve language teaching and translation.

### **1.2. Contrastive linguistics**

Contrary to what is often believed, most of the world's population is multilingual and multicultural, though multilingualism is not always recognised by public institutions. Living in these communities, human beings need a tool to communicate with each other, and to carry on human and social affairs. They seem know that "However many languages a person knows, that's how much a person is worth" - (Croatian folk saying).

The main issues that will be discussed in the session are: terms dealt with contrastive linguistics, contrastive studies in the practice and science, trends and patterns of contrastive studies, challenges and problems in contrastive linguistics and contrastive linguistics definition.

#### **1.2.1. Some terminological issues**

The label *contrastive* has been used in linguistic inquiry mainly to refer to inter-linguistic and inter-cultural comparisons. It has also been used for comparisons within languages and cultures. The purpose of contrastive studies is to compare linguistic and socio-cultural data across different languages (cross-linguistic/cultural perspective) or within individual languages (intra-linguistic/cultural perspective) in order to establish language-specific, typological and/or universal patterns, categories, and features.

### (1) *Contrastive studies, contrastive analysis, and contrastive linguistics*

Depending on what particular authors feel to be the most appropriate description for the issue under discussion, the labels can be found as *(Applied) Contrastive (Language) Studies*, *Contrastive Linguistics*, *Comparative (Historical or Typological) Linguistics*, *Contrastive (Interlanguage) Analysis*, *Contrastive (Generative) Grammar*, *Comparative Syntax*, *Contrastive Lexicology/Lexicography*, *Contrastive Pragmatics*, *Contrastive Discourse Analysis*, or *Contrastive Sociolinguistics*, to mention but a few.

Behind this terminological profusion there seems to exist a difference of scope with regard to the three main collocations the aforementioned terms tend to cluster around, namely: (i) *contrastive studies*, (ii) *contrastive analysis*, and (iii) *contrastive linguistics*. It would seem that contrastive studies name the most general field, embodying both the linguistic and the extralinguistic (e.g. cultural, ethnographic, semiotic, etc.) dimensions of contrastive research.

By contrast, contrastive analysis is a way of comparing languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what does not need to be learned in a second-language-learning situation.

Contrastive linguistics could be said to restrict its domain to just contrastive linguistic research, whether *theoretical*, focusing on a contrastive description of the languages/cultures involved, or *practical/applied*, intended to serve the needs of a particular application, as will be discussed in turn.

Beside, contrastive linguistics was referred to as ‘parallel description’, ‘differential studies’, ‘differential description’, ‘dialinguistic analysis’, ‘analytical confrontation’, ‘analytical comparison’, ‘interlingual comparison’, as well as ‘comparative descriptive linguistics’, or ‘descriptive comparison’. The very term ‘contrastive linguistics’, however, was coined by Benjamin Lee Whorf in his article *Languages and Logic* published in 1941, where he drew the distinction between comparative and contrastive linguistics, maintaining that the latter was “of even greater importance for the future technology of thought” (1967: 240, Adapted from Kurtes: 233).

### (2) *Language contact and multilingualism*

Language changes and its important source is the contact between different languages and resulting diffusion of linguistic traits between languages. Language contact occurs when speakers of two or more languages or varieties interact on a regular basis. Multilingualism is likely to have been the norm throughout human history, and today, most people in the world are multilingual. Before the rise of the concept of the ethno-national state, monolingualism was the characteristic mainly of populations inhabiting small

islands. However, with the ideology that made one people, one state, and one language the most desirable political arrangement, monolingualism started to spread throughout the world.

When speakers of different languages interact closely, it is typical for their languages to influence each other. Through sustained language contact over long periods, linguistic traits diffuse between languages, and languages belonging to different families may converge to become more similar. In areas where many languages are in close contact, this may lead to the formation of language areas in which unrelated languages share a number of linguistic features.

Multilingualism is becoming a social phenomenon conducted by the process of globalization and cultural openness. It makes people in the society multilingual.

A multilingual person is someone who can communicate in more than one language, either actively (through speaking, writing, or signing) or passively (through listening, reading, or perceiving). More specifically, the terms ‘bilingual’ and ‘trilingual’ are used to describe comparable situations in which two or three languages are involved. A multilingual person is generally referred to as a polyglot.

Multilingual speakers have acquired and maintained at least one language during childhood, the so-called first language (L1). The first language (sometimes also referred to as the mother tongue) is acquired without formal education, by mechanisms heavily disputed.

### **1.2.2. Contrastive studies in the practice and science**

#### *1.2.2.1. Contrastive studies in practical daily life*

"Making comparisons is a very human occupation. We spend our lives comparing one thing to another, and behaving according to the categorizations we make. Patterns govern our lives, be they patterns of material culture, or patterns of language. Growing up in any society involves, in large measure, discovering what categories are relevant in the particular culture in which we find ourselves" (Dienhart 1999: 98). Language contrast happens in human daily life and language exists due to the contrast in its nature and elements. "*Things* are classified as the same, similar or different, and we construct mental ‘boxes’ in which to put objects which ‘match’ in some way. However, the number of new boxes we create diminishes rapidly as we grow older. We become ‘fixed’ in our perceptions, and the world, once fresh and new, loses its ability to surprise as we become increasingly familiar with the objects it contains, and increasingly adept at placing the objects encountered today into boxes created yesterday" (Dienhart 1999: 98).

Second language learners, teachers of foreign languages, translators, travelers, businessmen, etc. in nature are polyglots. They determine both interlingual and intralingual (dis)similarities in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, semantics and discourse in order to improve their communicative language competence. Their communicative language competence is activated in the performance of the various language activities, involving reception, production and interaction. Polyglots test themselves and self-testing helps them to learn what they do not know so as to guide study activities. That is a perfectly valid use of testing, but polyglots do not appear to realize the direct benefit that accrues from testing themselves on their ability to retrieve the tested knowledge in the future. They are practical contrastists. Polyglots do contrast in their listening, speaking, writing and reading.

Second language learners, travelers, business men, translators, etc., in nature, teach themselves second language. In the case, they do contrast languages (on the levels of phonetics, phonology, lexis, grammar and meaning in listening, speaking, reading and writing): they are contrastive ‘naive’ linguists; they improve their learning second language by continual assessment, by self-testing.

#### *1.2.2.2. Contrastive studies in science*

The origins of CL as a regular linguistic procedure can be traced back to the middle of the 15th century, and the appearance of the first contrastive theories to the beginning of the 17th century (cf. Krzeszowski 1990). In the 19th century comparative investigations used an empirical, historical methodology to discover genetic links and language families; while in modern linguistics, J. Baudouin de Courtenay’s comparative studies of Slavic and other Indo-european languages were continued by the Prague Circle, whose members also spoke about analytical comparison, or linguistic characterology, as a way of determining the characteristics of each language and gaining a deeper insight into their specific features. But it was not until after World War II that the discipline reached its heyday. From its beginnings till the 1970s, CL basically served practical pedagogical purposes in foreign and second language teaching/learning. It was mainly synchronic - in fact, some would exclusively use the term comparative linguistics to refer to the diachronic study of genetically related languages - interlingual or cross-linguistic (rather than intralingual), involved two different languages, adopted a unidirectional perspective, focused on differences, and was directed to foreign language teaching/learning.

When we speak about the world as a global village, when there exists a greater recognition of intra-/cross-linguistic/cultural variation, a growing awareness has emerged of the need for multilingual/multicultural and intra-linguistic/cultural competence and research. In addition, and as a side effect of this, there has been a change of focus in

linguistic research, which has shifted away from speculative autonomous theorizing in the direction of a more dynamic and practical view of language processing and interaction.

This trend towards expansion was foreseen by Trager (1949), who suggested that CL should move beyond structurally-oriented views - predominant in the United States throughout the 50s and 60s - and extend its scope so as to describe the differences, as well as the similarities between two or more linguistic systems, both cross-linguistically and intralinguistically, and both synchronically and diachronically. Thus, on the diachronic level, issues regarding the phylogenetic development of languages are high on the agenda of CL, as well as the ontogenetic development of individual language acquisition claims that in order to account for an individual's communicative competence, the goal of inquiry in CL must also include discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics, a position also endorsed by Kühlwein (1990), among many others, who argues for the integration of structural and processual CL, the latter entailing the analysis of systems of knowledge and knowledge about structural systems. Likewise, Liebe-Harkort (1985), following Lado's (1957) position, adds that languages cannot be compared without comparing the cultures in which they are spoken. The same idea is insisted upon by Kühlwein (1990), who is particularly interested in culturally differentiated semiotic systems that serve as the starting point for social and language interaction. But in addition, he emphasizes the relevance of CL for foreign language teaching, given its growing recognition of performance errors, interlanguage, transfer (i.e. the interference of L1 in L2), and the interaction of cognition and discourse processes. An extreme form of this trend is represented by a recent view of contrastive literature that reduces the key task of CL to predicting and thereby obviating learners' errors, while this procedure is openly criticized by other authors such as Garrudo-Carabias (1996).

Originally, all contrastive studies were pedagogically motivated and oriented. In recent years, however, distinctions have been drawn between "theoretical" and "applied" contrastive studies. According to Fisiak, theoretical contrastive studies give an exhaustive account of the differences and similarities between two or more languages, provide an adequate model for their comparison, determine how and which elements are comparable, thus defining such notions as congruence, equivalence, correspondence, etc. Applied contrastive studies are part of applied linguistics. Drawing on the findings of theoretical contrastive studies they provide a framework for the comparison of languages, selecting whatever information is necessary for a specific purpose (e. g. teaching, bilingual analysis, translating, etc.).

“Applied contrastive studies” are sufficiently distinct from “theoretical contrastive studies”, the former, as part of applied linguistics, especially when related to teaching, must necessarily depend not only on theoretical, descriptive, and comparative linguistics but also on other disciplines relevant to teaching; among them are psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, didactics, psychology of learning and teaching, and possibly other areas which may be important in ways difficult to evaluate at the present moment.

Although the word “contrastive” is used most frequently with reference to cross-language comparisons of the sort described above, various authors have been trying to replace it with other terms, such as “cross-linguistic studies”, “confrontative studies”, and some even more esoteric terms, for example, “diaglossic grammar”, which enjoyed but a brief existence. The word “contrastive” is likely to outlive all the competing terms since it appears in titles of monographs and collections of papers on the subject.

### **1.2.3. Trends of contrastive studies**

Contrastive descriptions can be conducted at every level of linguistic structure: phonology, lexicology, grammar and complete discourse (textology) in various perspectives of linguistic approaches (structural, generative, functional, cognitive).

In the perspective of phonology, most contrastive phonetic studies focus on articulatory and acoustic comparisons between two languages.

Lexical contrastive linguistics concentrates on cross-/intra-linguistic comparisons of “lexical items”, i.e. stable (multi)word pairings of form and meaning. The comparisons consider grammatical, semantic and pragmatic information involved in the interdependence between lexical choice and contextual factors.

Contrastive Discourse Analysis and Contrastive Pragmatics are two subfields of contrastive research. Wider in scope, Contrastive Discourse Analysis studies such issues as: (1) discourse particles, (2) rhetorical relations and rhetorical transfer across languages/culture, and (3) genre studies and information packaging across languages and/or text-types, and their side effects in terms of coherence and cohesion. Contrastive Pragmatics investigates certain phenomena: (i) conversation from a speech act, (ii) deixis, (iii) politeness; and (iv) other pragmatically oriented aspects of speech behaviour.

Another subfield of contrastive linguistics is Contrastive Sociolinguistics. It aims at the systematic comparison of sociolinguistic patterns and the development of a theory of language use. Contrastive Sociolinguistics is regarded as a branch of sociolinguistics and aims at providing comparison of cross-/intra-/multi-cultural sociopragmatic data along such research lines as multilingualism, language planning and language politics.

Computational linguistics devotes the creation of different types of electronic dictionaries or the design of computer tools for cross-linguistic research, especially in translation enquiries and machine translation, where the results have been disappointing, partly due to the limitations of computational resources.

Lastly, contrastive linguistics focuses on a contrastive description of the languages/cultures in order to serve the needs of a particular application and to establish language-specific, universal patterns, categories and features.

#### **1.2.4. Patterns of contrastive studies**

Contrastive studies are based on:

- Formal correspondence (for contrastive studies of word order, function words, inflections, affixation, suprasegmentals, alliteration, rhymes),
- Semantic equivalence (for contrastive studies of meaning of words, phrases and sentences),
- Pragmatic/functional equivalence (for contrastive studies of meaning/function of texts, structure of discourse, stylistic properties, quantitative aspects of text).

The prominent models in contrastive studies are Typology of contrastive studies, Contrastive studies in intralingual and interlingual perspectives, and Composite contrastive model.

##### **(1) Typology of contrastive studies and Ultimately Relevant *tertia comparationis***

The taxonomy of contrastive studies is "based on the assumption that various kinds of contrastive studies can be distinguished in a strict relation to various *tertia comparationis* adopted and, consequently, to various kinds of equivalence" (Krzyszowski: 25).

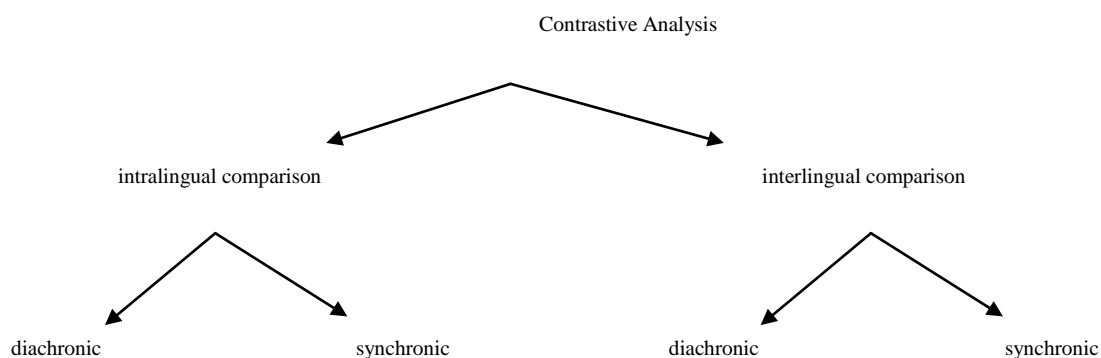
According to Krzyszowski's models, contrastive studies are based on statistical equivalence, translation equivalence, system (system equivalence), constructions (semanto-syntactic equivalence), rules (rule equivalence), phonological and lexical contrastive studies (substantial equivalence) and pragmatically equivalent texts. Each type of contrastive studies has its own hierarchy of Immediately Relevant *tertia comparationis*, which have to be stated and described relative to the Ultimately Relevant *tertium comparationis* and to the factual data that undergo comparisons (see more Krzyszowski 1990: 34).

##### **(2) Contrastive studies in intralingual and interlingual perspectives**

Contrastive studies can be conducted intralingually or interlingually, on a synchronic or diachronic basis, and they can be distinguished: synchronic intralingual and diachronic intralingual comparison, synchronic interlingual and diachronic interlingual comparison, which could be illustrated in Figure 1.1.

*Figure 1.1: Contrastive studies in synchronic and diachronic perspectives*

*(Adapted from Jia Hongwei & Tian Jiafeng: 2271)*



Diachronic intralingual comparison refers to the comparison of constituents on the levels of sound (phonetic and phonological), words (lexical), structure (grammatical) and meaning within a language through history, while synchronic intralingual comparison refers to the comparison of constituents on the same levels within a particular language during a given period.

Diachronic interlingual comparison is mainly focused on comparing historically related forms in different languages, while synchronic interlingual comparison focuses on comparing two or more languages or dialects to determine the differences and similarities and to find out the implications of the differences and similarities for language universals, linguistic typology, language teaching and other language-related areas as mentioned above.

Contrastive (both intralingual and interlingual) studies can occur at every level of linguistic structure (speech sounds, written symbols, word-formation, word meaning, collocation, sentence structure) and complete discourse.

### *(3) Composite contrastive model*

According to Кашкин (2010: 25ff), the topics on linguistic structure (phonology, lexicon and grammar) and complete discourse can be studied from the perspectives of universal elements in linguistic systems, such as individual and social (i/s), intralingual and interlingual (e/d), synchronic/contact and diachronic/dynamic.



The pair of individual and social (i/s) contrasts is associated with linguistic system inside the mind of an individual, idiolect, and with linguistic system of communities, groups of individuals and integral individual.

The pair of intralingual and interlingual (e/d) contrasts is connected with the possibility to combine the two systems into a class and/or a domain, which, of course, is relative and depends on the scope of the study.

Language contact occurs when two or more languages or varieties interact. When speakers of different languages interact closely, it is typical for their languages to influence each other and their languages are called contact ones. Interlanguage is a particular contact language. Language contact occurs in a variety of phenomena, including language convergence, borrowing, and relexification. The most common products are pidgins, creoles, code-switching, and mixed languages. Language contact can also lead to the development of new languages, and the change as a result of contact is often one-sided.

Language contact leads to improvement social and individual language competence and the (competence of) language becomes dynamic. This is the case of learning second language.

All the above contrastive linguistic models can be taken at every level of linguistic structure: speech sounds, written symbols, word-formation, word meaning, collocation, sentence structure and complete discourse and occur in learning and teaching foreign-language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and thinking).

#### **1.2.5. Challenges and problems in contrastive linguistics**

There are many problems and challenges that remain to be solved. These problems can be named:

- (i) The difficulty of comparing some aspects of language such as the temporal, aspectual and modal systems of verbs, or such areas as gender or the functional/semantic values of prepositions;
- (ii) Impossibility to contrast two (or more) languages in their entirety;
- (iii) Contrastive research requiry of a holistic view that approaches the items under study against the background of productive and receptive/comprehensive message-processing systems;
- (iv) The central point of controversy - the question of equivalence or *tertium comparationis*;
- (v) Adequate equipment of computerized resources and tools to undertake this kind of study.

### 1.3. Contrastive linguistic definition

Contrastive linguistics can be regarded as a branch of comparative linguistics that is concerned with the comparison of two or more (subsystems of) languages which are 'socio-culturally linked'. It "plots the outstanding differences among tongues – in grammar, logic, and general analysis of experience" (Whorf 1967: 240, adapted from Kurteš: 233). Contrastive studies is an area of linguistics in which a linguistic theory is applied to a comparative description of two or more languages, which need not be genetically or typologically related. The success of these comparisons is strictly dependent on the theory applied.

Being a research, contrastive study is a systematic process of inquiry consisting of at least three elements: question, data, and analysis and interpretation of data. The question/hypothesis dealing with *tertium comparationis* is crucial problem in contrastive linguistics. In contrastive linguistics *tertium comparationis* that makes linguistic item comparables is connected with language equivalence and its nature. It will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The subject of contrastive studies as mentioned, are polyglots (people in multicultural and multilingual environment) including second languages students, tourists, language teachers, translators, linguists, etc. are the agents of contrastive studies. They are 'naive' or professional contrastive linguists. From this perspective and depending on the purpose of the course, contrastive studies can be interlingual and intralingual. The problem will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The object of contrasting is two or more languages, more specifically, items of two or more languages that contrastivists can perceive and deduce to communicate. Contrastive descriptions can occur at every level of linguistic structure (speech sounds, written symbols, word-formation, word meaning, collocation, sentence structure) and complete discourse. The question will be mentioned in Chapter 3.

Contrastive linguistics has its aim to determine the (dis)similarities between two or more languages to discover the "inner essence of man" and, in particular, the universal basis of human cognition, to improve learning and teaching language, translation and to find lexical equivalents in the process of compiling bilingual dictionaries. The term "similarity" in contrastive linguistics deals with a lot of concepts: (dis)similar) meaning, (dis)similar) function, (dis)similar) grammatical environment, and (dis)similar) context.

The well-known method of learning and teaching foreign languages and translation is contrastive method, which is used to contrast linguistic and socio-cultural data across different languages or within individual languages in order to establish language-specific

and/or universal patterns, categories and features. The problem will be mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5.

Contrastive linguistics started developing in the middle of XX century as an independent discipline within the field of applied linguistics to fulfil new needs arising in learning, teaching language and translation. Various other terms are used to refer to this same discipline, such as contrastive analysis, contrastive studies, parallel description or cross-linguistic studies. Although there are subtle differences between the terms, they are considered as synonyms. Contrastive linguistics can be defined as the systematic synchronic study of similarities and differences “in grammar, logic, and general analysis of experience” of two or more languages, carried out for theoretical or practical purposes.

### **SUMMARY**

- 1 Contrastive linguistics is a branch of linguistics focusing on all the aspects of theoretical and applied linguistics, which aims at contrastive study of two or more languages in order to describe their differences and similarities for building and developing general linguistics, promoting the understanding between cultures and civilizations, including learning and teaching languages, translation, compiling bilingual dictionaries.
- 2 Subjects of contrastive studies are polyglots (people in multicultural and multilingual environment) including second languages students, tourists, language teachers, translators, linguists.
- 3 Contrastive studies can be described at every level of linguistic structure: phonology, lexicology, grammar and discourse or text, and in the perspectives of interlingual, intralingual, individual and/or social contact, of linguistic contact or dynamics.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Contrastive linguistics definition.
2. Multilingual/multicultural and intra-linguistic/cultural aspects that polyglots face in their communication.
3. Your own contrasts in learning, teaching second language(s) and translation.
4. Contrastive linguistics in Unit 1 (On camera), Solution - Intermediate (Falla & Davies).
5. Purpose of contrastive linguistics.

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