

GARTZ, IRENE. "AN APPROACH TO A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH, BASED ON SUPPOSED UNDERLYING UNIVERSALS." M. A. DISSERTATION, I.T.E.S.M., 1978, PP. 111-18.

PREFACE

It is well-known that linguistics, a youngster among scientific, (or almost scientific) disciplines, suffers from syndromes of adolescence. During this time of crisis, traditional concepts are being swept away, new values have to be found. Every day brings about new discoveries. Discussions of controversies consist of speaking up rather than listening.

The relatively new field of contrastive analysis¹ is one of the battle fields where opposites, ^{in applied linguistics} meet and try to defeat each other. The present paper does not claim to contribute to one or the other's victory. It will pick out from different offerings in linguistic theory those that promise a feasible approach toward the contrastive analysis of English and Spanish, regardless of loyalties to any theoretical conviction. The stress is on 'approach' rather than on findings. It is dedicated to the student who

¹Contrastive analysis will be abbreviated in the following as CA.

works with both languages and has a basic training in linguistics. He will be the future language teacher, the future textbook writer, the future translator, who might prefer to base his work on analytical method rather than on empiricist proceedings.

Contrastive analyses of English and Spanish have been published from the viewpoint of structural as well as early transformational grammar, all of them beginning with and emphasizing the sound systems of both languages. A great deal of very good results have been found and accumulated. I will only mention the contrastive studies done by William E. Bull (1965), Robert L. Politzer and Charles N. Staubach (1965), Robert P. Stockwell and Donald Bowen (1965), and Stockwell, Bowen, and John W. Martin (1965). All of them started from the spoken linguistic forms and compared the surface structures of English and Spanish (i.e., sounds in their environment, morphemes, words, phrases, and/or sentences) in their similarities and differences.

During the Nineteenth Annual Roundtable Meeting on Linguistics and Language Studies, in 1968 at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in fifteen lectures, given by well-thought-of linguists, the

following questions arose: What actually is CA? What is it good or necessary for? What are its pedagogical implications? - One thing became obvious: In order to answer the preceding questions satisfactorily, CA must be actualized and looked at from the viewpoint of recent linguistic theory. Since it was in those and the following years that the concepts of linguistic universalism, as well as the generative approach to semantic analysis, found a wider acceptance, these ideas had to be dealt with in contrastive studies.

In 1971, Robert J. DiPietro published his book LANGUAGE STRUCTURES IN CONTRAST¹. He outlines ways of how to compare different languages, each of which is conceived of as a different surface projection from one and the same deep structure². The book provoked controversial critiques. One negative review states that it is the author's view on language rather than a contrastive analysis:

¹The main ideas of the book had already been sketched out in DiPietro's lecture at the Round Table Meeting: "CA and the Notions of Deep and surface grammar", G.U. Monograph Series #21, 1968.

² A discussion of the interpretation of 'deep structure' as two very different concepts and its delimitation for the purpose of the present paper will be given in Chapter 1.

The core of the present volume is a sketch of DiPietro's understanding of language design ...

In sum, DiPietro's book is neither the study of contrastive linguistics that will help answer some of the questions basic to a theory of second-language pedagogy, nor a useable introduction to the techniques of contrast.¹

I had the opportunity to register in one of Dr. DiPietro's courses on CA at the Georgetown University². The above quoted deficiency, if there is one, did not show during the course. LANGUAGE STRUCTURES IN CONTRAST was our textbook, mainly read for homework assignments. Most of the time in class sessions was dedicated to actually realizing the suggestions, outlined theoretically in the book, with real problems from twelve different languages and language families, represented in the class.

I then felt challenged by the idea to modify and transform the inspirations from that course into a procedure, applicable to our undergraduate students' need, students who are receiving the necessary train-

¹Spolsky, p.744

²Graduate Course, Summer 1977

ing in linguistics in order to become capable English and Spanish teachers and/or translators.

The paper, presented here, tries to meet the challenge. Chapter 1 will propose a non-language specific, semantico-syntactic deep-structure model with discussions of its theoretical framework. The latter mainly relies on ideas of Charles Fillmore (1968) and Wallace Chafe (1970). A series of equivalent sentences from English and Spanish will be exposed in the steps it takes to project them from the deep structure onto the language-specific surface structures. The contrasts between the languages, then, appear at the different levels of the projection. They can be easily spotted and better explained than by a comparison of the resulting surface structures, only. The projection rules, or realization rules, are a kind of transformation rules. In Chapter 2, following mainly the techniques of componential analysis, an approach is presented, helpful for the selection of the lexical components of the deep structure, especially for lexical items that do not show a one-to-one correspondence in both languages. A relatively large part of the chapter on lexical elements is dedicated to the analysis of idiomatic expressions. Chapter 3 deals with contrasts at the sound level. Its approach is generative (Chomsky and Halle, 1968) rather than descriptive. A last, much shorter, chapter is dedicated

to cultural-situational contrasts that might jeopardize the effect of communication, even if the linguistic forms are adequate.

All chapters contain various problems, resolved ones as well as suggested ones for exercises. The latter are provided with hints that might facilitate their analysis. For specific difficulties, specially at the sound and the morpho-syntactic level, bibliographical references are given to sources which already propose well elaborated answers to surface problems.

When I talked to Dr. DiPietro about my idea, he encouraged me to start with the project. I owe a lot of gratitude to him as well as to Dr. Michael Zarechnak (G.U.) who gave me an insight into semantic analysis.

I am also deeply in debt with the Departamento de Humanidades del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), specially its Dean, Lic. Rosaura Barahona, and to my advisers Dr. Eyleen McEntee de Madero and Michael Scott (M.A.), for admitting the idea of presenting this paper as a requirement for my Master-of-Arts degree in English Language, and for their guidance and support.

Last but not least, I want to thank the senior students from both ITESM (Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa) and the UANL (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León - Facultad de Filosofía y Letras - Licencia-

tura en Traducción), who during the fall semester 1977 participated in my courses. Here the idea of 'approaching CA another way' were carried out. All students showed high interest and made valuable contributions in the performance of analyses as well as in native-intuitive statements about contrasting forms. Their questions and doubts, often, made me become aware of fallacies and deficiencies in level adaptation and methodology.

Mistakes and weaknesses, on the other hand, which, I am sure, are contained in the paper, are my responsibility only. Nobody else is to blame for them.

INTRODUCTION

... CA as the method whereby the differences between two (or, more rarely, among more than two) languages are made explicit.
DiPietro

There is no doubt that since people have systematically studied a language other than their native, teachers and textbook writers have always mentioned differences, observed in the two linguistic systems the student has to deal with. A person with linguistic background in our time, however, misses a systematic comparison and an explicit description of the problems in question, in older grammar books. Furthermore, the textbooks for European languages of former centuries, and even ~~books~~ ^{traditional grammars} from the 20th, based their criteria on the well-known classical languages Greek and, specially, Latin. This means that, for example, a book for learning French as a second language could have been written in German and that the elements and structure of the Latin language were used as mediators for the exposition of morphosyntactic rules.

It is the merit of 20th Century Structuralism to have recognized the individuality of each language's organism and to provide us with analytical and descriptive procedures. Putting their convictions into practice, the American structural linguists developed the audio-lingual teaching method. It was based on the behavioristic learning theory. Structural linguists who were in charge of teaching English to foreign students developed sets of remarkable textbooks that gave a graded introduction into the learning of the English language. They had the opportunity to try out their system over decades. As a general evaluation, it can be said that their goal to produce bilingual speakers was not achieved. The reasons for this downfall were two: psychological and linguistic. Psychology meanwhile has gone away from the pure behavioristic learning theory and takes into account cognitive involvement as an important factor in the learning process. Many linguists, from their experience as English-language teachers, have found that the reaction to the same presentation of English varies in students that have a different language background. What is easy for the speaker of one language can bring about enormous problems for speakers of other groups. It became obvious that points of similarity and contrast are distributed differently for each language pair on long continua.

The logical consequence of this observation seems to be that for teaching a second language to a foreign student different teaching material is required for each speaker group, teaching material that takes into consideration the character of the students' native language. According to Charles Fries:

The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.¹

Though this might sound overstated today, the underlying assumption, grown from countless observations as well as from psychological theories, is valid: that a second-language learner will transfer his language habits to the new language, that this transfer can be very helpful where both language systems coincide, but that it will cause considerable problems where there are differences.² CA can be a helpful tool for establishing contrastive points. Besides, it is a field, interest-

¹cf. Lado, 1957, p. 1

²The technical term for the transfer of a helpful habit is 'facilitation', of a wrong habit 'interference'.

ing in itself, to many linguists.

Once justified the need for CA, the question arises: Who gains from it? It is, first of all, the person who prepares the teaching material, normally a teacher himself. Each teacher, moreover, sometimes has to supplement inadequate material and to diagnose the individual student's (or the group's) problems. A language teacher who is a contrastive analyst will teach in a more economic and more effective way because he is ^{more} able to spot the difficulties, even to foresee them, and to develop a strategy to present them in a graded scale of difficulties.

The remaining question, after reflecting on the 'why', 'what for' and 'for whom' is the 'how'. The literature about CA manifests a general disagreement on this point. Eric P. Hamp states this fact in the following:

If a grammar is a system, or so-called system of systems, one might think of a fragment, or set of mapping rules, whereby one grammar fails to be isomorphous with the other. If a grammar, on the other hand, is a collection of inventories (e.g., of phonemes or something of the sort), one might think of isolating a difference arrived at by some sort of subtraction where the net overages or underages are somehow inven-

toried.

... If a grammar is a theory for generating (or judging the well-formedness of) the sentences of a language, two grammars will differ in the rules and specifications comprising them.¹

According to this, the analyst seems to be automatically forced into a decision about the selections to make among the different linguistic theories. But there should be a more tolerant attitude which would favor future results. This attitude should start from pragmatic considerations. It can even be called an opportunist attitude: Everything that helps clarify a problem of contrast should be welcomed as an ally. As far as teaching CA is concerned, Langendoen makes a reasonable suggestion:

We should give them (the students) the ability to recognize an interesting linguistic problem when they see one, that is, one which throws some light - negative or positive - on our conception of what languages in general are like.²

Eugene A. Nida, whose vision of language stems from problems

¹Hamp, 1968, p. 140

²cf. Bach and Harms, 1968, Preface

found in translation, considers the latter a branch of comparative linguistics. He thinks that translation is "one of the best places to test some present-day theories about language structure". He challenges linguistics to establish a "kind of dynamic typology of languages" and explains his concept of this in the following:

Let us assume, for example, that we could rank all languages in a series, beginning with those formally closest to a particular source language and then proceeding, language by language, to those structurally most distant from the source language. Such a rank-order of languages would depend upon both grammatical and semantic factors. ... The other dimension of our model would be the extent of formal correspondence between the languages as revealed in actual translation.¹

Nida neither neglects nor emphasizes the utopian nature of this proposal. What he desires would be feasible only if there did exist CA's for all languages in comparison with one specific source language as norm of reference. And this could bring about a situation similar to that in medieval times when all linguistic criteria were

¹Nida, 1969, p. 495

oriented toward Latin.

Many authorities, many opinions about CA. However, the disagreement about "how to do a CA" must not paralyze the impetus to continue analyzing contrasts in languages, be it or not done within the limitations of a 'trial-and-error' approach.

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CHAFE, WALLACE L. MEANING AND THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.
CHICAGO, ILL.: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 1970,
CH. 9, PP. 95-104.

States, Processes, and Actions

- 9.1 In this chapter and those which follow, some rather **specific suggestions regarding the semantic structure of English** will be made, and in Chapter 17 there will be some similar suggestions regarding the semantic structure of another language. The reader should keep in mind that these **suggestions are tentative in the extreme**. A vast amount of hard and detailed work will be necessary before anyone can feel even moderately secure regarding the matters that will be discussed. It is necessary, however, to **begin somewhere**, and it is in that spirit that the following chapters are presented.
- 9.2 Syntactic description has usually taken the *sentence* to be its basic unit of organization, although probably no one would deny that systematic constraints exist across sentence boundaries as well. From time to time some attention has been given to "discourse" structure, but the structure of the sentence has seemed to exhibit a kind of closure which allows it to be investigated in relative, if not complete, independence. If we look at language from a semantic perspective, intersentential constraints play a role that is probably more important than under other views of language, for a number of the limitations which cross sentence boundaries are clearly semantic in nature. Even so, it remains possible for us to focus on the semantic structures which underlie sentences, so long as we keep in mind that this focus is artificially narrow and that many things will be explainable only when we extend our view beyond it. From

time to time we will look briefly across sentence boundaries, but most of our discussion will be limited to sentences. At first the limitation will be even narrower: to sentences which contain only one occurrence of what I shall call a *verb*.

- 9.3 I shall take the position that every sentence which is of interest to us is built around a *predicative* element. Usually, though not always, this predicative element is accompanied by one or more *nominal* elements. For example, in the sentences *The clothes are dry* there is a predicative element involving the meaning (*be*) *dry*, and it is accompanied by the nominal element *the clothes*. In the sentence *Harriet sang* there is a predicative element *sang* accompanied by the nominal element *Harriet*. Henceforth I shall refer to predicative elements as *verbs* and to nominal elements as *nouns*. These terms have been used most often for elements of surface or syntactic structure, not for semantic elements. In discussing semantic structure I could very well—and perhaps more comfortably—use terms like *predicate* and *argument* for *verb* and *noun* respectively. The reason I shall not do so is that what I am calling semantic verbs and nouns are reflected typically—in a **distorted** way, to be sure—in surface verbs and nouns. It is unnecessarily awkward to start with one set of terms, say *predicate* and *argument*, and have to change to another, *verb* and *noun*, at some unmotivated point along the path from semantic to surface structure.
- 9.4 My assumption will be that the total human conceptual universe is dichotomized initially into two major areas. One, the area of the verb, embraces states (conditions, qualities) and events; the other, the area of the noun, embraces "things" (both physical objects and reified abstractions). Of these two, the verb will be assumed to be central and the noun peripheral. There are various kinds of evidence which are best explained by assuming centrality for the verb. I shall mention a few general points now, but the entire exposition which follows I think will tend to confirm this assumption. It is of some interest, first of all, that in every language a verb is present semantically in all but a few marginal utterances. While it is accompanied typically by one or more nouns, we will shortly discuss some sentences in which only a verb is present. Utterances which semantically have no verb, like *oh* or *ouch* perhaps, seem best regarded as relics of the prehuman kind of communication discussed in Chapter 2, in which the direct symbolization of unitary