

Editors' introduction Functional and corpus perspectives in contrastive discourse analysis

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This special issue of *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* offers a collection of original contributions to the study of languages in contrast from discourse, corpus, and functional perspectives. The papers were presented at the Sixth International Conference on Contrastive Linguistics, held in Berlin 29 September–3 October 2010, in the context of two panels: 'Discourse analysis and contrastive linguistics' (organized by Maite Taboada, Simon Fraser University and María de los Angeles Gómez-González, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), and 'Contrastive linguistics, corpus analysis and annotation' (organized by Julia Lavid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and Erich Steiner, Universität des Saarlandes).

Much of the 'new wave' of contrastive linguistics has focused on aspects of the grammatical system, examining phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic similarities and differences across two or more languages. As with many other areas of linguistics, there exists a renewed interest in discourse perspectives in the study of languages in contrast, and much of that work uses corpora and corpus linguistics techniques to study language.

By 'new wave' of contrastive linguistics, we mean a renewed interest in the contrast and comparison of languages. The framework of the International Conferences in Contrastive Linguistics, initiated at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela in the late 1990s, has provided a venue for the dissemination of such work. A number of volumes out of those conferences

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(Butler *et al.*, 2005; Gómez-González *et al.*, 2008b, 2008c; González Álvarez and Rollings, 2004; Iglesias Rábade and Doval-Suárez, 2002) have summarized the innovative research being carried out in contrastive linguistics. As Gómez-González and Doval Suárez (2005) point out, contrastive linguistics is taking shape as its own discipline, distinct from the 'old style' of contrastive analysis, which focused on contrastive comparisons for the purpose of teaching languages, or took a diachronic view (see Gómez-González and Doval-Suárez, 2005 for an overview of the old style and the 'revival' of contrastive linguistics). It is also different from typological studies, which tend to involve more than two languages, and center on language structures at levels below the sentence.

We see the interaction of discourse analysis and contrastive linguistics as a two-way channel. On the one hand, the contrastive linguistics methodology can serve as a helpful method in the analysis of discourse, highlighting the ways in which discourse organization, as a functional constraint, may be similar across languages, and pinpointing what linguistic constraints lead to different discourse structures. On the other hand, discourse analysis has long studied the way in which language in general is organized, and contrastive analyses can bring more richness to that kind of analysis.

In the rest of this introductory article, we outline how contrastive linguistics has grown out of earlier approaches that had a focus on second language teaching, and describe how discourse and corpus perspectives have contributed to the contrastive study of languages. Much of the ground covered here has already been explored in introductions to other compilations, and in the volumes themselves (Iglesias Rábade *et al.*, 1999; Iglesias Rábade and Doval Suárez, 2002; Butler *et al.*, 2005; Gómez-González and Doval-Suárez, 2005; Gómez-González *et al.*, 2008a, 2008c). Johansson (2007) also offers a good summary of the history of contrastive analysis.

1. The new wave of contrastive linguistics

Broadly defined, contrastive linguistics is the study of one or more languages, for applied or theoretical purposes (Johansson, 2000). We mentioned above that we see a new wave of contrastive linguistics, distinct from earlier approaches known under the umbrella terms 'contrastive linguistics' or 'contrastive analysis', where the focus was the teaching of languages. The discipline was probably started by Lado (1957), and a number of studies tried to predict difficulties that native speakers of language X would have in learning language Y by examining the differences between the two languages (Wardough, 1970; di Pietro, 1971; Eckman, 1977). The concepts of *interference* (or negative transfer), where structures from one language have a negative impact on the learning of a second language, and (positive) *trans-*

fer, where the structures of the two languages match and can therefore be transferred from the native into the target language (Ellis, 1994), were central to this view of contrastive and applied linguistics, and related work on error analysis (Corder, 1981).

These fundamental concepts were what eventually led to the partial rejection of contrastive analysis, because they were found to be too strong and narrow. Ultimately, the behavioural roots of the approach were rejected in favour of theories of second language acquisition that took into account pragmatic and contextual phenomena, such as the learner's motivation or the context in which the learning takes place (Long and Sato, 1984; Sajavaara, 1996). More recently the concept of interlanguage has been modified to include some of those aspects (Selinker, 1992), and more higher-level discourse aspects have been addressed by contrastive rhetoric (Connor, 2002).

Another area where contrastive linguistics had an influence was in translation (Beekman and Callow, 1974; Enkvist, 1978). The goal was to help translators identify the differences between languages, with the goal of achieving better translations.

The new wave that we refer to constitutes a broadening and reinterpretation of the term *contrastive linguistics* to refer to any study, from different theoretical perspectives, that takes as point of departure the comparison of two (typically, although more are possible) languages. Pioneers in this area are the studies of Hawkins on English and German (Hawkins, 1986), or the cross-cultural pragmatics of Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989). These new studies often make use of corpora in their comparisons, and, although they tend to be applied to second language teaching and learning, they do attempt to draw more general conclusions (König and Gast, 2009).

2. Contrastive discourse studies

Gast (forthcoming) points out that the fact that most recent papers (e.g., those published in the journal *Languages in Contrast*) have a discourse orientation may be related to the fact that they use corpora, so we will see many connections between the work mentioned in this section, which is mostly in the area of discourse analysis, and the work in the next section, devoted to corpus-based work.

It would be impossible to survey all the existing work on discourse with a contrastive focus. We will simply mention that many of the functional approaches to discourse take a contrastive perspective, from studies on Theme and information structure across languages (Hatcher, 1956; Steiner and Ramm, 1995; McCabe-Hidalgo, 1999; Caffarel, 2000; Lavid, 2000) and rhetorical structure (Rösner, 1993; Delin *et al.*, 1994; Grote *et al.*, 1997; Salkie and Oates, 1999; Ramsay, 2001) to characterizations of different aspects of

genres across languages and cultures (Mitchell, 1957; Koike and Biron, 1996; Luzón Marco, 2002; Taboada, 2004).

Within the studies on contrastive discourse it is worth mentioning the work of the Multilingualism group based at the University of Hamburg, some of which has an emphasis on translation. Many of their publications deal with contrastive issues in discourse, in particular two of the volumes in the Hamburg Studies in Multilingualism published by John Benjamins¹ one on connectivity (Rehbein *et al.*, 2007) and one on multilingual discourse production (Kranich *et al.*, 2011).

3. Corpus-based contrastive studies

Johansson (2007) makes a compelling case for the use of corpora in contrastive studies, attributing, in part, the resurgence of contrastive work to the availability of corpora. It is certainly the case that corpora, whether small-, medium- or large-scale, have given us new insights into the comparison of languages. Multilingual corpora are useful because they provide information about all aspects of the language, from morphological to discourse-level comparisons. The composition of the corpora may also shed light on differences across genres and cultures, translated versus original texts, and those written by native and non-native speakers.

In terms of the origin of the corpus texts, there is a clear two way distinction between translation and comparable corpora (Johansson, 2007), also referred to as parallel and comparable. The former are translated versions of the same texts, sometimes aligned (parallel) at the sentence level, whereas the latter are original texts in each language, collected to be comparable in terms of genre and register (in the sense of Halliday, 1989), that is, in terms of type of text, subject matter, formality and mode of delivery.

Modern corpus-based approaches have proven most fruitful in the original pursuit of contrastive analysis, that of second language learning. In particular the work of Granger and colleagues has resulted in a number of corpora, and studies on contrastive corpora with the goal of helping the second language learner and teacher (Granger, 1998a; Granger *et al.*, 2002, 2003, 2009). Most Computer Learner Corpora (CLC) research adopts the methodology of *Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis*, which may involve two types of comparison: a comparison of native language and learner language (L1 vs. L2) and a comparison of different varieties of interlanguage (L2 vs. L2). The result is a view of learner language in terms of the words, phrases, grammatical items or syntactic structures that are either over- or underused by learners and therefore contribute to the foreign-sounding characteristics of advanced interlanguage even in the absence of errors. The topics dealt with range from modals (Aijmer, 2002; McEnery and Kifle, 2002), high frequency vocabulary (Ringbom, 1998,

1999; Altenberg, 2002), connectors (Milton and Tsang, 1993; Granger and Petch-Tyson, 1996; Altenberg and Tapper, 1998) collocations and prefabs (Howarth, 1996; Granger, 1998b; De Cock, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003) to information structure (Boström Aronsson, 2001; Callies, 2009). This approach has been criticized for presenting interlanguage as an incomplete version of the target language. Granger (2004: 133) justifies the approach arguing that ‘most CLC research so far has involved advanced EFL learners (...). For this category of learners more than any other, it makes sense to try and identify the areas in which learners still differ from native speakers and which therefore necessitate further teaching.’

4. The papers in this collection

The papers included here have been organized around four themes: studies of discourse markers; information structure; registers and genres; and phraseology.

The first theme, discourse markers, includes four papers that examine the differences in the use of discourse markers across languages. Recent research has shown the fruitful perspective that contrastive studies can bring to the study of discourse markers and their use in signalling coherence relations (Knott and Sanders, 1998; Altenberg, 2002; Degand and Pander Maat, 2003; Taboada, 2004; Fabricius-Hansen, 2005; Degand, 2009, among others). These contrastive studies add to a large existing body of research that has focused primarily on English, some of it with a historical perspective (Brinton, 1996). Much territory remains to be covered in contrastive studies of discourse markers, from a discourse point of view, or from the point of view of translation studies, into how discourse markers are translated, added or omitted across languages, and what their role is in the interpretation of coherence relations.

The first paper in this group, by Taboada and Gómez-González, takes as a starting point the study of one particular coherence relation, Concession, and examines how it is signalled through discourse markers. The paper compares English and Spanish, across two different genres, one written and one spoken. The authors conclude that the genre (written or spoken) seems to be more important in the selection of functions for the concessive relation than the languages themselves. That is, the use of concessive relations is very similar across languages, but varies more across genres.

The paper by Stenström makes use of two rich corpora: the Corpus Oral del Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid (COLAm), and the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT). Stenström compares the use of the discourse marker *venga*, a very frequent item in informal and teenage talk, with functions both at the discourse and interactional level of conversation. She

shows that, given its multifunctionality in Spanish, it has more than one equivalent in the English corpus.

The third paper, by Adam and Dalmas, compares discourse markers in French and German, first from a general point of view, thus abstracting from existing studies in either language, and then in the two languages in contrast, with focus on three particular markers. Adam and Dalmas propose that the differences in the use of discourse markers rest with two characteristics of French that make it different from German. First, in French, the signs of discourse organization on the part of the speaker tend to be more explicit. Second, the verbal element in French has a more central global role than it does in German.

The final paper in this section, by Romero-Trillo, examines the use of Pragmatic Markers as a tool to support interpretation and verify the current interpretation of the communicative act, in a process labelled 'communicative triangulation'. Romero-Trillo studies the English of native and non-native speakers, showing that there are subtle intonation differences in the production of Pragmatic Markers across those groups. His analyses can contribute to pedagogical aims and help improve intercultural communication.

The volume continues with a section on information structure. Previous research shows that there is a great deal of variation in the morpho-syntactic realization of information structure categories (theme, topic, focus, etc.) across speech and writing (e.g., Hannay, 1994; Gómez-González, 2001, 2004). Contrastive investigations (e.g., Gómez-González and González García, 2005; Hannay and Martínez Caro, 2008a, 2008b) can bring to light systematic differences between languages in the encoding of such categories, in their frequency of usage, and with regard to the 'competing motivations' (Du Bois, 1985) that prioritize one choice over another. Examples of competing motivations may be the expression of 'alternative linguistic construals' (Goldberg and Del Giudice, 2005), the manifestation of different degrees of (inter)subjectivity (Stein and Wright, 1995; Scheibman, 2002; Verhagen, 2005), or the implementation of different perspectivizing strategies (Langacker, 1985, 1989, 1990).

The first paper in this section, by Hannay and Gómez-González, examines an understudied aspect of language, the use and function of parentheticals. In particular, the authors study thematic parentheticals, those occurring between elements of the Theme, or immediately following the Theme (as defined by Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Their analysis of an English-Dutch corpus shows that thematic parentheticals have similar functions in the two languages, but that both genre-specific and language-specific differences also exist. The authors suggest that there is an interesting interplay between the syntactic features that a language allows and the stylistic differences that arise as a result.

Herriman's paper has as a starting point the similarities in presentation order in English and Swedish. Both languages make use of the principle of end-weight, and both languages rearrange elements following that principle, with rearrangements resulting in fronting, extraposition, existential constructions and cleft sentences. However, upon close inspection, she discovers that Swedish makes much more frequent use of fronting and it-clefts, which she attributes to language-specific constraints (V2 in Swedish, and SV in English). As with many of the other papers, her careful study of fine-grained aspects of discourse has applications for second language teaching.

Doval Suárez and González Álvarez also concern themselves with structure of information, in their case the use of it-clefts in learner corpora. They contrast use, frequency and structural complexity of it-clefts in the Spanish portion of the International Corpus of Learner English with the native equivalent in the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays. They conclude that, contrary to the findings of previous studies carried out with learners with different L1s, Spanish learners underuse it-clefts. It is suggested that this underuse may point to the fact that the learners are overusing other focus constructions such as pseudoclefts. The paper is an excellent example of a type of contrastive analysis that examines learner's language, or interlanguage, but unlike older approaches to interlanguage, does so from a quantitative point of view.

The structure of Theme and Rheme, both in English and Spanish, has been well researched (Gómez-González, 2001; Lavid *et al.*, 2010; Taboada, 2004). The differences across the two languages are well known, as are the challenges that more flexible word order and subject ellipsis bring to the application of an English-based notion (Theme as the first ideational element, Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) to the study of Spanish. In the paper by Arús, Lavid and Moratón, however, new insights are brought to bear, stemming from the annotation of thematic structure in a contrastive corpus of English and Spanish. Arús and colleagues propose the notion of Pre-Head and Head to account for the split nature of the verbal element in Spanish (containing both the Participant and the Process). The paper describes the process of rigorous annotation of the thematic structure of the clause in a corpus of newspaper discourse, and puts forward proposals for the large-scale annotation of such a complex phenomenon.

The paper by Hidalgo and Downing is also part of the same project, an annotation effort at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Hidalgo and Downing examine the pragmatic notion of topic, and annotate it in a contrastive corpus of assorted genres in English and Spanish. They also annotate the information status of discourse referents (Gundel *et al.*, 1993), with the two-fold goal of creating an annotated corpus and obtaining insights about topic organization in the two languages.

The third set of papers deal with discourse and contrastive issues from the point of view of genre or register. Although most of the other papers also consider genre as an important variable in contrastive analyses, the papers in this section take the notion of genre as the point of departure for the analysis. The uncovering of recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns in different text types and genres, and across different languages and socio-cultural settings, raises speakers' awareness of how different discourse roles, discourse strategies and power statuses are enacted in their linguistic choices. This has been a continuous preoccupation among discourse analysts and grammarians (e.g., Swales, 1990; Biber *et al.*, 1999; Bhatia, 2002), but it clearly is still a hot issue that deserves further investigation. The papers in this section make an important contribution to the study of genres from a contrastive point of view.

Kunz and Steiner open the section with a study of cohesion in English and German. They consider cohesion from the point of view of language contact, and study texts in either language and their translations in the other, analysing the influence that translation has on language change. Cohesion analyses have a long tradition in English, starting with the seminal work of Halliday and Hasan (1976), but there exists little work comparing studies of cohesion in English based in that framework to analyses in other languages. Kunz and Steiner propose a framework, methodology and corpus annotation process that will facilitate the systematic comparison of cohesive resources across languages and genres.

In Pounds' paper we find a contrastive analysis of an everyday genre, real estate advertisements, in English and Italian. Given the culture-specific context of the genre, Pounds uncovers interesting differences in the way the persuasive nature of the texts is conveyed in the two languages. She uses the Appraisal framework (Martin and White, 2005) to study how evaluative language is expressed in the two sets of corpora. Appraisal and evaluative language are particularly interesting cross-linguistically because, as pointed out by Hunston and Sinclair (2000: 74), 'evaluation appears parasitic on other resources and to be somewhat randomly dispersed across a range of structural options shared with non-evaluative functions'. Evaluation tends to be highly implicit and discourse-dependent (Hunston, 2000: 199–201), which makes a contrastive analysis particularly well-suited to uncovering general properties of evaluation across languages. Pounds finds interesting differences between English and Italian, in particular in the degree of explicitness of the evaluation.

Taboada and Carretero also study evaluative language from the perspective of Appraisal. In their work, a corpus of informally-written reviews of books and movies is analysed, contrasting English and Spanish texts. The genre is particularly interesting because it is also persuasive and argumentative, but informal in this case (the reviews were posted online, on consumer-oriented

sites). Theirs is part of a large-scale annotation effort, and their paper discusses, in particular, how the categories of Appraisal need to be very well defined, so that the corpus can be reliably annotated by different coders.

Zamorano-Mansilla and Carretero close this section with a paper within the same research project, aimed at creating a large annotated corpus of English and Spanish. Their paper focuses on the annotation of modality in the two languages, and in particular the issues of annotator reliability when specifying types of modality conveyed by modal verbs and particles. This paper focuses on dynamic modality, showing that, although it is comparable in English and Spanish from a definition point of view, in practice its annotation leads to the most disagreements.

The final section of the special issue contains two papers that focus on phraseology, as a bridge between lexico-grammar and discourse. Rica Peromingo analyses lexical bundles in two corpora, one of non-native writers of English, and another one of professional native writers (containing English and Spanish subcorpora). The study uncovers interesting results, showing that non-native writers resort to multi-word units more frequently than native speakers of English, but that they show both over- and under-use of certain multi-word units, in particular those present in the native language. Rica Peromingo emphasizes the importance of multi-word units as topics in the teaching of English as a second language.

Mansilla also studies phraseology, but this time with a Spanish-German contrast, and focusing on an interesting semantic field, that of lying, falsehood and deceit. She approaches the concept of falsehood as a metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), and explores the different expressions of falsehood in the two languages, and the different cognitive models that they reveal.

5. Conclusion

The papers in this special issue, in summary, provide examples of cutting-edge research in contrastive analyses of different languages, all of them with a discourse and functional perspective. The languages included (Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish) cover a range of European languages, showing not only diversity in their grammatical structures, but also subtle differences that are the focus of many of the papers. The techniques used, from concordancing and careful annotation to painstaking qualitative analysis, showcase the variety of approaches to the study of languages in contrast.

Note

1. http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t_seriesview.cgi?series=HSM

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