

Studies in Contrastive  
Semantics, Pragmatics,  
and Morphology

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# Studies in Contrastive Semantics, Pragmatics, and Morphology

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# Introduction:

## An overview of current trends in contrastive semantics, pragmatics, and morphology

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The book is a collection of articles intended especially for scholars interested in contrastive studies, as among linguists from all over the world, there is still the need to explore languages by comparing or contrasting them, or their elements, in all aspects, formal, functional, cognitive-semantic, pragmatic, or cultural. This book focuses on contrastive linguistics from semantic, pragmatic, and morphological point of view.

Contrastive linguistics can be defined as “cross-linguistic studies involving a systematic comparison of two or more languages with a view to describing their similarities and differences” (Hasselgård 2010: 98). It became popular in the United States in the 1960s and was originally pedagogically oriented (James 1980). Although contrastive analysis was initially treated as a remedy for problems in teaching and learning foreign languages, the high hopes raised by contrastive linguists were dashed, which led to its partial rejection in America, as pointed out by Ringbom (1994) and Krzeszowski (1990: 10). At the same time, in Europe, the contrastive perspective persisted. It was employed not only in pedagogical grammars, but also in translation theory, the study of language universals, and language typology (Fisiak 1980, 1984, 1991; Krzeszowski 1990; Chesterman 1998).

As observed by Altenberg and Granger (2002: 7), some impetus towards the revival of contrastive linguistics in the 1990s was provided by computer technology, which enabled the development of large corpora. The role of comparable monolingual corpora, as well as bilingual or multilingual ones, in contrastive research is emphasized by, among others, Johansson (2007). He argues that corpora give insight into the languages under comparison and, apart from highlighting linguistic or cultural differences, serve as indications of universal properties of two (or more) languages.

Computer technology led to the increased interest in the study of concordances (i.e., contexts in which a given lexical items occur), collocations, and idioms. The availability of corpus search engines made the task of compiling concordances relatively straightforward and resulted in a variety of contrastive

lexical studies (e.g., Weigand 1998; Altenberg and Granger 2002; Ebeling and Ebeling 2013). The use of corpus data and web data influenced investigations in contrastive and cross-linguistic word-formation (e.g., Hüning 2010; Götzsche 2016), though this area of contrastive studies is still underresearched (as noted by Lefer 2011).

The impact of advances in theoretical linguistics on the development of contrastive studies will be discussed below.

First, let us mention some problems faced by anyone who is engaged in contrastive studies. These include the establishment of *tertium comparationis* and identification of the (level of) equivalence between elements from two (or more) languages under comparison.

*Tertium comparationis* is defined as “some kind of constant serving as the background of sameness against which the differences are to be measured” (Ringbom 1994: 738). Krzeszowski (1990) argues that it is necessary to make the *tertium comparationis* explicit in rigorous contrastive studies. He points out that apart from recognizing formal correspondence, semantic equivalence, or translation equivalence as potential *tertium comparationis*, it is possible to treat pragmatic (or functional) equivalence as a basis for contrastive studies. Depending on the subject of contrastive research to be carried out (e.g., the study of phonological segments, idiomatic expressions, or discourse), a different kind of equivalence may be more appropriate to motivate the selection of items to be compared.

As observed by Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2003), the reliance on a particular type of equivalence is also related to the difference between vertical contrastive studies and traditional horizontal contrastive studies. In horizontal contrastive studies, linguists rely on translation equivalence, since the starting point of analysis is a particular construction or phenomenon in one language, which is then juxtaposed with its formal, semantic, or functional equivalents in another language. In vertical contrastive studies, a researcher starts from a universal category or construction and investigates its realizations in two or more languages. The difficulty of determining *tertium comparationis* in word-formation is demonstrated at length by Lefer (2011). The fuzziness of some putatively universal concepts (e.g., the concept of a compound) and the usefulness of translation in identifying cross-linguistic correspondences in morphological studies are emphasized by ten Hacken (2013). The problem of selecting an appropriate *tertium comparationis* and establishing equivalence between verb-preposition units in three languages (i.e., Croatian, English, and French) is considered carefully by Katunar and Raffaelli (this volume).

Theoretical linguistics and contrastive linguistics can cross-fertilize each other. Theoretical linguistics can provide the appropriate *tertium comparationis* (by providing a set of categories and concepts, defined in a language-independent manner), while contrastive studies can be employed to support or falsify



theoretical claims. As early as in 1986 and 1990, Krzeszowski argued that the apparatus of cognitive linguistics, in particular the theory of prototypes, can act as *tertium comparationis* for a contrastive analysis of prepositions. Apart from Rosch's theory of prototypes and categorization, advances in Cognitive Linguistics which turned out to be fertile for contrastive linguistics include, among others, studies of metaphor, metonymy, patterns of polysemy, and conceptualization (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1991; Taylor 1993; Talmy 2000; Tyler and Evans 2003). Contributions collected in Boas (2010) demonstrate the possibility of using construction grammar in contrastive linguistic research. The rapid development of contrastive cognitive semantics can be illustrated by, for instance, a volume by Dziwirek and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010), in which the authors provide detailed semantic analyses of emotion concepts and different complement choices of emotion predicates (in Polish and English).

The volumes edited by Gómez-González and her collaborators, for example, Butler, Gómez-González, and Doval-Suárez (2005) and Gómez-González, Mackenzie, and González Álvarez (2008), indicate the felicity of the cognitive approach as well as functional frameworks in contrastive research.

It needs to be emphasized that contrastive research has expanded (focusing on units larger than words and sentences), involving discourse, sociolinguistic, and cultural studies. The notion *contrastive pragmatics* has been adopted as an umbrella term for a variety of possible fields of research in this area. As these new directions in linguistics have led to greater interest in spoken communication and studies of pragmatic markers, they are focused on a variety of different perspectives and theoretical approaches, such as Conversation Analysis, Appraisal Theory, grammaticalization, politeness theory, cross-cultural pragmatics, or variational pragmatics (see Schneider and Barron 2008). Whereas Littlewood (1983), Fillmore (1984), and Oleksy (1984) introduce some general remarks concerning contrastive pragmatics, the volume by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) on cross-cultural differences between requests and apologies concentrates on large differences in the realization of felicity conditions for speech acts and the rules for their usage. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning other volumes devoted to pragmatic aspects in different languages, such as Oleksy (1989), Pütz and Neff-van Aertselaer (2008), Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg (2006), or Aijmer (2011). In our volume, Ewa Bogdanowska-Jakubowska employs Critical Discourse Analysis (the term used by Fairclough and Wodak [1997]2009: 258) to discuss notices which can be observed in American and Polish urban public spaces and transport.

The chapters included in the present monograph demonstrate that new insights can be gained by combining contrastive perspective with various theoretical models. They also testify to the importance of linguistic corpora and web searches in lexical contrastive studies. The authors of the majority of

the contributions to this volume adopt a cognitive approach. Ewa Konieczna employs the Principled Polysemy framework, elaborated upon by Tyler and Evans (2003). Maria Brenda presents semantic networks for prepositions *near* and *next to*, basing her proposals on semantic-cognitive analyses carried out by, among others, Talmy (2000), Langacker (1991), and Tyler (2012). Agnieszka Kaleta makes use of a functional theory of syntax, such as the semantic binding theory proposed by Givón (1980), and combines it with the insight from cognitive approaches to complementation (as represented by works of Langacker and Wierzbicka). The chapter by Daniela Kartunar and Ida Raffaelli is couched within the framework of cognitive semantics (as indicated by frequent references to Taylor 1993 or Šarić 2008), but they also recognize the usefulness of the early work by structural linguists (such as Tesnière).

This book consists of two parts. Part I, *Contrastive semantics*, contains five chapters.

Maria Brenda carries out a corpus-based investigation of the English prepositions *near* and *next to* and indicates their equivalents in Polish (such as the prepositions *przy*, *obok*, *opodal*). Distinct senses of *near* and *next to* are identified as a result of a careful examination of the relations between the trajectory and the landmark encoded by the two prepositions in a sample of over 2000 sentences culled from the British National Corpus. The author argues that *near* and *next to* represent impoverished polysemy (in comparison to other English prepositions, such as *at* or *over*).

Agnieszka Kaleta compares complementation patterns of selected classes of English and Polish verbs, including causative verbs, perception verbs, cognition verbs, and modality verbs. The author identifies several factors which influence the choice of an appropriate complementation pattern in English and Polish. She discusses various degrees of semantic bond between events in the main and the complement clauses. Subtle semantic differences are examined which result from the choice of alternative complementation patterns. Moreover, it is demonstrated in the chapter that Polish verbs may differ from their English equivalents in the type of the construal imposed on the complement scene.

Daniela Kartunar and Ida Raffaelli focus on governed prepositions, that is, on prepositions which are obligatory complements of their verbs. Having examined a large inventory of Croatian Verb+Preposition constructions, with nineteen various spatial prepositions, the authors go on to compare the Croatian data with their translation equivalents in English and French. Kartunar and Raffaelli distinguish three levels of equivalence between Verb+Prepositions constructions in the languages under analysis. Furthermore, they formulate some general tendencies concerning the selection of governed prepositions in Croatian, English, and French.

Katarzyna Kokot-Góra investigates the conceptual category of gratification in English and Polish within the model of propositional semantics. She analyzes

collocations with the English lexeme *prize* and the Polish lexeme *nagroda* in order to identify semantic functions of participants in the situation of rewarding. She suggests that some collocations indicate a semantic blending of the participants with the function of the beneficiary and the reason for gratification. She also observes the occurrence of collocations which represent non-obligatory elements in the situation of rewarding (such as the aim or the procedure of gratification). The author points out some cultural differences between English and Polish.

The chapter by Ewa Konieczna brings a careful cognitive-linguistic study of abstract senses of the English particle *under* and the Polish verbal prefix *pod-*. The author adopts the Principled Polysemy Model, as developed by Tyler and Evans (2003) and Tyler (2012), and emphasizes the importance of experiential correlation between the physical (spatial) senses and extended abstract senses of particles or prefixes. She points out that although the prototypical spatial sense of the English preposition (or particle) *under* and the Polish verbal prefix *pod-* is the same, it gives rise to distinct non-spatial extensions in the two languages under analysis.

Part II, *Contrastive pragmatics and morphology*, contains three chapters.

Ewa Bogdanowska-Jakubowska investigates inscriptions present in American and Polish urban public spaces and transport. The notices instruct how to behave and interact with people as well as what is acceptable in a particular place. Therefore, it may be stated that they constitute the rules of social interactions. Other inscriptions are expressions of friendliness which are supposed to make passers-by and customers feel good. Paying special attention to the notion of politeness, the author of the paper analyzes the notices by employing a combination of two approaches, namely Critical Discourse Analysis and pragmatics.

The chapter by Mirosław Bańko and Diana Svobodová discusses the order by which the adaptation of a loanword's pronunciation, morphology, and spelling proceeds in Polish and Czech. In their empirical and quantitative research, they divide a sample of loanwords into groups corresponding to different adaptation patterns and analyze the loans for the purpose of revealing a typical adaptation order which determines their arrangement.

Bożena Cetnarowska considers the phenomenon of gender marking in names of professions in English and Polish. Employing data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), she analyzes terms which denote women who operate aircraft. The analysis confirms the prevalence of the use of the attributive adjective *female* or the formation of compounds as common means of signaling the feminine gender of pilots in English. The investigation of the Polish data indicates the preference for the use of suffixal derivatives or Noun+Noun juxtapositions. Some other issues discussed by the author involve the identification of various types of

heads in compounds and juxtapositions, the reversibility of their constituents, and semantic differences between alternative names of women in aviation.

We would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to the content of this book. Due to the variety of perspectives taken by the contributors, the volume can serve as a useful tool in the work of all linguists who specialize in contrastive studies. On the basis of the articles presented in this book, they may form their own view on the methodology of contrastive studies or the approach to this kind of studies in general.

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