Contrastive Analysis

Dr. Bana Al-Massry
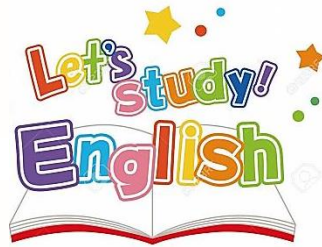
4 Open Learning

1 Translation Department

1

A

Let's study! English

23 | 11 | 2024

GOOD MORNING!

The required book for our course is *A Workbook in Contrastive Analysis.*

The course is entitled *Contrastive Analysis*. From the name, what do you think the course is about?

Student: Maybe, it is about comparing between two languages concerning their grammar and structure.

Professor: Exactly! So basically, **you need to conduct a comparative or a contrastive study between two languages in order to compare their features.**

What are the aspects we usually concentrate on when comparing two languages?

Student: The structure.

Professor: Yes, and this is *syntax*.

Student: Culture.

Professor: We call this science *pragmatics*. It is used in order to see the function of a certain sentence in a context. This larger context is pragmatics.

Student: Meaning of words in different contexts.

Professor: This is related to *semantics*. We might have a word that has multiple meanings, and we need to find its meaning in a certain context. This is related to semantics.

So, we compare ***pragmatics***, ***syntax*** and ***semantics***.

We also compare ***phonology***. We compare phonology in the phonetic sense that exists in two languages.

If we want to compare Arabic and English in terms of phonology, what are the differences that we have?

Student: There are some letters that can be pronounced in Arabic but cannot be pronounced in English like the letter (خ).

Professor: We are not concerned with the letters; we are concerned with sounds. So, basically, we have some certain sounds that DO exist in English, and do <u>not</u> exist in Arabic, and vice versa.

Please, open your book on page 9. Actually, the book is very important because we are going to read from it and highlight some important information from it. **<u>The exam questions are going to be from the book</u>**.

CHAPTER ONE

1- Aspects of Contrastive Linguistics:

Contrastive linguistics aims "to provide a complete and objective description of contrasts between two languages" (Vintar, 2002), and "deals with the application of these findings in practice, which basically means to evaluate the results (i.e. differences) and determine the consequences...' (Vintar, 2002). It can be said that applied contrastive analysis is to predict the points of interference between the native language of the learner and the target language.

So, we need to provide a descriptive study on two languages. When we provide it, are we concerned with the reasons of these errors or mistakes that happen while producing the language?

Students: Yes.

Professor: Do we have to go back and give reasons of why those mistakes or errors happen? Maybe, we have to identify the errors and the mistakes, but **<u>if we want to give reasons why this mistake happens; occurs, we need to conduct an error analysis.</u>**

We have a difference between two terms or concepts. Students, often, confuse those terms.

I. Contrastive Analysis

When we conduct a contrastive analysis, we <u>just compare</u>. For example: *We have this structure in Arabic, and we do not have it in English*, and the other way round. BUT, we do not explain why these errors occurs..

II. Error Analysis

When we conduct an error analysis, we are concerned with the sources of those errors. So, if you want to explain why errors happen, you have to conduct an error-analysis study.

ما يعنينا في هذه النظرية هو سبب حدوث الخطأ.

> *Contrastive analysis is usually described as a broad field of study, since it can be applied on major aspects of language, such as the* **phonological***, the* **semantic***, the* **syntactic** *and the* **pragmatic***.*

We talked about the aspects that we have to cover during a contrastive-analysis study.

> *The pragmatic level includes "text studies and some aspects of the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective",*

So, we take into consideration the culture and the society of the two languages that we are dealing with.

> *and "portrays language as a social cultural phenomenon intertwined with the subjective reality as perceived by the speaker".*

This is what pragmatics deals with while conducting a contrastive-analysis study.

> *Results can be efficient only if a scientific description of the target language is compared with its parallel description of the native language of the learner.*

The idea here is that we have to compare the target language and the native language with each other.

ستلاحظون أنه هناك الكثير من التكرار فيكرر الكتاب المعلومة نفسها بأكثر من طريقة عدة مرات لكن الفكرة ذاتها. على سبيل المثال، الفكرة هنا أننا نقارن بين لغتين.

The comparison is concerning both the similarities and the differences. That is why it is called contrastive.

> *Actually, early studies of contrastive linguistics tend to focus on what they call* **"the micro linguistic features",**

So, we have something called *micro linguistic features*. What do we deal with in the micro linguistic features?

Basically, in the micro linguistic features, we focus on grammar, words, structures and phonology.

When we are concentrating on the micro linguistic features, do we have to analyze the whole text? Or is it enough to deal with a sentence?

Since it is 'micro', then the sentence is the largest unit that we can analyze.

On the other hand, we have *"the **macro** linguistic features"*. Here, we are concerned with the whole text.

> *Actually, early studies of contrastive linguistics tend to focus on what they call **"the micro linguistic features"**, which **concentrate on** particular aspects of language such as **phonology, grammar, and lexicon, and consider the sentence as the largest analyzable unit.***

So, when we want to conduct a study, we have to ask ourselves questions like the following.

> *The research questions suggested are:*
> - *"What are the consonant phonemes in languages X and Y?*
> - *How do they differ in inventory, realization, and distribution?*

So, we should ask ourselves: *How often do people use those phonemes? Do they exist at the beginning of the word or at the end of the word?*

> - *What is the tense system of languages X and Y?*

For example, if we want to compare the tenses that we have in Arabic and English, English has way more tenses than Arabic. Arabic has 3 or 4 tenses, and English has 12 tenses. This is something that I have to keep in mind as a researcher who is conducting a contrastive analysis.

> - *What are the verbs of saying in languages -X and Y?"* (Johansson, 2000)

For example, in English, we have verbs of saying such as "tell". In Arabic, we have (قال/أخبر).

> *However, with the development in linguistic studies, contrastive analysis is broadened to include* **"macro linguistic features",**

At the beginning, we are concerned with *micro* linguistic features.

As we go on and progress in research, we have *macro* linguistic features.

> *which study language skills within situation and context;*

We talk about how to open or end a conversation, how to talk on the phone, how to write an email, etc. We know that the structure of a formal or informal email is different. Those are macro linguistic features.

> *that is, text linguistics and discourse analysis, taking into consideration the communicative function of language.*

So, communication is a primary concern.

> *So the research question become like:*
> - *"How is cohesion expressed in language X and Y?*

Maybe, if we want to reach cohesion in Arabic, we would rely on the use of the conjunction (و). This is something that does not occur in English i.e., we do not have to repeat 'and' multiple times. We use 'and' only before the last item of the items that we are counting.

> - *How are the speech acts of apologizing and requesting expressed in languages X and Y?*

It means how we can request or how we can apologize. Of course, there are certain phrases that you can use to apologize to your father, mother or any member of your family, which are quite different from the way you apologize to your boss. We are taking into consideration the situation that the speaker is dealing with.

Concerning the request, the way you ask your mother to bring you a glass of water is different from the way you ask a waiter to do so.

With your mother, you can say, *"Mum, can I have a glass of water?"*

With the waiter, you say, *"Could you please bring me a glass of water?"* You are much more formal with the waiter.

> - *How are conversations opened and closed in languages X and Y?"*

We concentrate on the context and the situation.

نركز على السياق والموقف وعلى كيفية تعامل المتحدث معهما في لغتين مختلفتين.

To sum up, contrastive analysis is to compare (i.e., to focus on similarities) and to contrast (to focus on differences) between two languages like English and Arabic.

Do we have differences between English and Arabic? Can you mention some of them?

Student: Grammar.

Professor: Yes, our grammar is different from theirs. Basically, when we want to construct a sentence in English, we start with a subject, a verb and then a complement.

While in Arabic, we use a verb, a subject and a complement.

Also, in Arabic, we have something that we call nominative sentences, which is something that does not exist in English.

Actually, we have a whole study that was conducted on the differences and similarities between English and Arabic at the end of the book, which is REQUIRED. If you have time, you can read it on your own. I am going to deal with it in the class. It is important. A lot of questions usually come from that study with additional examples.

Also, we compare and contrast between two languages in terms of *phonology*. Arabic is way different from English in terms of phonology. English is not a phonetic language, which means you do not write as you hear.

Arabic is, somehow, phonetic. You write what you hear in most cases.

Student: We also talked about context and situations.

Professor: Yes. We are talking about the way that a speaker expresses himself in different situations. This is a part of pragmatics.

Also, we compare the semantics. We have a lot of words that have multiple meanings. We focus on the meaning on a context, which leads us to semantics.

Those are the main aspects that we focus on when we conduct a contrastive analysis.

We talked about something really important, which is error analysis. We are going to talk about it in our upcoming lectures.

So, we have a difference between contrastive analysis and error analysis. In error analysis, we discuss the sources of the errors, while in contrastive analysis, we compare, contrast and identify errors, but we do not explain the reasons why these errors or mistakes occur.

Actually, we have a difference between an error and a mistake. We are going to talk about this later on.

> ***The steps that should be followed in order to apply a contrastive study are explained in the following:***
>
> ## A. The phonological level:
>
> ***Phonology means: contrastive***
>
> ***a- "to contrast the phonetic set of both languages and establish the differences. These may lie in the pronunciation of a phoneme that occurs in both languages or in the absence of certain phonemes in one of the languages.***

Sometimes, we have the same phonemes in both languages.

Student: Are we talking about Arabic and English?

Professor: No. For example, we have /l/ and /b/ sounds in both Arabic and English but they are not exactly the same. The realization of the sound is a little bit different.

For example, American people pronounce /t/ in a way differs from the way British people or Arab people pronounce it. So, we have the same phoneme, but with different realizations.

We might have a phoneme that does not exist in other languages like some vowels, for example. Here, we are talking about the total absence of some phonemes.

> ***b- To compare the rules for the position of word stress if there are any".***

Word stress in English is different from in Arabic. We have different rules, and we have a lot of exceptions for stress placement in one language that are different in other languages.

Student: Do we compare between one language or two languages in this course?

Professor: We compare between two languages. Maybe in phonology, we compare between two accents. In Britain itself, we have many accents. But this applies only for phonology. In semantics and pragmatics, it is the same in two accents.

> *An aspect that is linked with contrastive phonology is intonation.*

We use a falling intonation when we want to say a statement and a rising intonation when we want to ask a question. This is confusing for Arabic speakers. We, usually, say our questions and statements with a falling intonation in Arabic. It is very difficult for some Arabic speakers to differentiate between a question or a statement.

- *You are late? [↗]*

We might say it this way instead of saying, *"Are you late?"*

> *"Intonation, coupled with paraverbal means of communication like mime and gesture,*

Paraverbal means something that is similar to verbal. Verbal is something that you say.

Paraverbal is like doing ✋instead of wait. This is a gesture.

> *"Intonation, coupled with paraverbal means of communication like mime and gesture, can convey very different meanings and is often the source of misunderstanding between native and non-native speakers of a language".*

Actually, gestures are different across cultures.

> *In the case of the mother tongue, it is easy to distinguish between the tiny variations and ascribe meaning to them, but when it comes to the target language, the role of intonation and pronunciation is neglected in many cases, which would consequently generate errors.*

***

> *"In contrasting the set of phonemes of two languages we must deal with the graphemes as well. In some languages as in English, a single grapheme may indicate several different phonemes or vice versa. It is important to contrast this feature with the languages that are strictly grapheme-bound".*

Grapheme is (الكتابة؛ الحرف المكتوب). In English, we may have two letters that are written to represent one sound like, for example, "sh" is pronounced as /ʃ/. It is just one sound although we have two letters.

يوضح لنا الكتاب كيف أن عدة أحرفٍ تمثل لنا صوتًا واحدًا فقط في العديد من اللغات. أما في لغةٍ مثل اللغة الإسبانية، يكتبون كما يلفظون فلا حروف إضافية ولا حروف ناقصة. وأيضًا في اللغة الفرنسية، كل الحروف إضافية ☺. لديهم فائض بالأحرف.

B. The semantic level:

In contrasting the lexicon of two languages, there are some aspects that should be considered. One such field may be the suffixes used in word formation, for example, the English suffix by that converts adjectives into adverbs, and the suffixes -less, -ness.

So, in order to convert the word 'unique' into a noun, we add the suffix -ness. It becomes *'uniqueness'*.

So, forming a new word is part of the semantic level, as far as the book is concerned.

Maybe, *morphology* is the best way to form a new word. Morphology is how words are derived. It is how to get, for example, an adjective from a noun. It is how to get a new word from an already existed word by adding suffixes and prefixes. Basically, we have bound morphemes and free morphemes.

Let me expand a little bit on the semantic level. Sometimes, when you get the literal meaning of a word and try to use it in your writing, you end up having a mistake. Look at the following example.

- لا يدّخر جهدًا.

How can we translate it into English? What is (يدّخر)?

Student: Save.

Professor:

So, it is *"He ~~saves~~ no efforts."* Actually, this does NOT sound right because in English, we say *"He spares no efforts."* So sometimes, when you take the literal translation, you end up having a mistake. It is recommended that you know the meaning of the word and how to use it in the appropriate context; otherwise, you might end up having mistakes. This is related to the semantic study.

C. The syntactic level:

In the case of two different languages, the purpose of contrasting them plays an important role, since it removes the difficulties that may result from the differences in the syntactic structures between the two languages.

When you want to learn a new language, it would not hurt or harm you to draw a comparison on how things are in your native language. It is not something that you have to do all the time, but as a beginner, it is recommended to do so.

Here are some aspects of the syntactic analysis:

1- The structural differences arise from the kinds of the grammatical relations used especially in the case of inflections.

2- The order of elements according to their importance in the sentence structure. This aspect should be compared because it shows great variations across languages. "Nearly all languages of the world can in some way or another <u>make an item of information stand out in a sentence</u>.

How can we make an item stand out in a sentence?

نود أن نشكل جملة. كيف بوسعنا أن نركز على كلمةٍ معينةٍ فيها؟

Student: We put it at the beginning of the sentence.

Professor: Yes. What else?

Student: We can use adverbs.

Professor: Exactly! <u>**We can use an adverb in order to emphasize what we are saying.**</u>

Most European languages use sentence structure as one tool for doing this. Some other ways are introductory or emphatic subjects and objects, emphatic adverbs and adjectives and intonation. The rules for the position of information at the end of the sentence are quite firm and are intuitively obeyed by most speakers, even by non-natives".

Look at this example.

- *You DID come late!*

Here, I want to emphasize the fact that you came late.

قلتها في هذه الطريقة لأنني أردت أن أركز على تأخره في القدوم.

If I do not want to emphasize anything, I just say *"He came late."*

We can use adverbs.

- *He is **really** intelligent.*
- *This is **particularly** good for you.*

These are adverbs of emphasis.

How can we make an item stand out in a sentence?

Student: It is by using adverbs.

Professor: Yes, it is by using **emphatic adverbs**. Can you give me a sentence of your own?

لا تحوي هذه الفقرة أمثلة في الكتاب لذا قد تجدون أمثلة خارجية في الامتحان عنها. تكون الأمثلة واضحة فلا تقلقوا.

Student: *He is **very** tall.*

Student: *He is **really** amazing.*

Student: *She came **quite** early.*

Student: *He **miraculously** survived.*

Professor: Excellent! *Miraculously survived* means (نجا بمعجزة).

D. Text Analysis and Pragmatics:

Discourse or register analysis is an important aspect for describing a language. There are rules for putting words together to form sentences, and there are rules for putting sentences together to form texts.

There are rules to link sentences together. For example, we use words like *moreover, however, on the other hand,* etc.

To put sentences randomly means to get non-coherent and meaningless texts.

If you put the sentences randomly, you get a text that has no meaning.

The problem arises from the fact that the grammatical rules are explicit, whereas the rules for forming texts are not.

Explicit means clear. So, you have clear grammatical rules for putting sentences together, but we do not have a lot of rules in order to form a text. Everyone has their own style when it comes to form a text.

Besides, they are confined to factors, such as the context, the cultural setting, the intonation, and the expectations of the writer.

You might expect the writer to say something, but he ends up saying something else.

Student: This is because those are his ideas and his thoughts.

Professor: Exactly! You cannot control other people's thoughts and ideas. You cannot direct them the way you want them to be directed. Actually, here we have a problem.

> *An example of the idea is the case of the formal letter which is used to convey important information and make a good impression. The rules of writing the formal letter vary across languages, and if it is not written in its correct form, the consequences may not be good.*

You might have different rules for forming a formal letter that is intended to your boss.

In fact, common people are not aware of the fact that we have these rules. They write whatever comes to their minds (شو بيخطر على بالن بيكتبوا).

أخبرني أحدهم مرة أنه كان يغطي حدثًا بوجود وزير الصناعة وزير الصناعة، فكتب: "برعاية السيد وزير الصناعة...". اتضح له لاحقًا أن هذا خطأ لأن الرعاية للرئيس لذا كان يجب أن يقول: "برعاية السيد الرئيس...".

Actually, the rules are different from one situation to another. Of course, if you are writing a letter to the king of Britain, it is quite different from the way you write a letter for a prime minister. You write the letter to the king with much more respect. This does not mean that you are not going to respect the prime minister, but you write in different ways.

> *That is why "the task of the contrastive text analysis and contrastive pragmatics is to compare these rules and factors and establish the differences which can help the learners of a language to communicate efficiently".*

Efficiently means *effectively*.

Here comes the role of contrastive analysis to compare and contrast between different situations in which we can use the language and to put rules for each situation.

<u>وصلنا إلى الصفحة ١٤ ولم نحذف أي فقرة.</u>

لدينا المتسع من الوقت لننهي الكتاب ونأخذ أمثلة. غالبًا يكون هناك سؤالين أو ثلاثة عن أمثلة عملية في الامتحان. قد أسألكم عن الخطأ الموجودة في جملة ما مثلاً. ليس بالضرورة أن تأتي الأمثلة في الامتحان من الأمثلة التي ناقشناها سويًا لكنها تكون على غرارها.

Thank you!