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**Linguistics M.A. 2nd Course**



## ***What is Contrastive Analysis?***

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## 1.1 *The place of CA in Linguistics*

A branch of linguistics called Contrastive Analysis (CA), and those who practice it are referred to as "contrastivists." The term 'linguist' can refer to the following: a person who is professionally engaged in the study and teaching of one or more languages; a polyglot, who might work as a translator or interpreter; someone interested in 'language families' or language history; a person with philosophical interests in language universals or the relationship between language and thought or truth; and more (James, 1980, p. 1). Such a classification will involve three dimensions or axes:

i) Sampson has pointed out that there are two broad approaches to linguistics, the generalist and the particularist. "On the one hand, linguists treat individual languages: English, French, Chinese, and so on. On the other hand, they consider the general phenomenon of human language, of which particular languages are examples". He also states that particularists will tend to be anthropologists or philologists, while the generalists are likely to have more philosophical interests.

ii) Along a second dimension linguists are divisible into those who choose to study one, or each, language in isolation, and those whose ambition and methods are comparative. The former are concerned to discover and specify the immanent 'genius' of the particular language which makes it unlike any other language and endows its speakers with a psychic and cognitive uniqueness. The comparativist, as the name implies, proceeds from the assumption that, while every language may have its

individuality, all languages have enough in common for them to be compared and classified into types. This approach, called 'linguistic typology' has established a classificatory system for the languages of the world into which individual languages can be slotted according to their preferred grammatical devices: so they talk of 'synthetic', 'analytic', 'inflectional', 'agglutinating', and 'tone' languages.

iii) The third dimension is that used by De Saussure to distinguish "two sciences of language": diachronic as opposed to synchronic. De Saussure explains the distinction as follows: "Everything that relates to the static side of our science is synchronic; everything that has to do with evolution is diachronic. Similarly, synchrony and diachrony designate respectively a language-state and an evolutionary phase". Typology: the approach here is synchronic. The diachronic parallel to typology is what is known as philology. Philologists are concerned with linguistic genealogy, with establishing the genetic 'families' of language-groups (ibid, pp.1-2). The question we set out to answer was of the nature of CA as a linguistic enterprise. Reference can be made to the above three classificatory dimensions, which are, it must be stressed, overlapping dimensions. i) Is CA generalist or particularist? ii) Is it concerned with immanence or comparison? iii) Is it diachronic or synchronic? The answers to these questions, with respect to CA, are not clear-cut: First, CA is neither generalist nor particularist, but somewhere intermediate on a scale between the two extremes. Likewise, CA is as interested in the inherent genius of the language under its purview as it is in the comparability of languages. The term contrastive implies, more

interested in differences between languages than in their likenesses. CA is a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted (i.e. contrastive, not comparative) two-valued typologies (a CA is always concerned with a pair of languages), and founded on the assumption that languages can be compared (ibid, pp.2-3).

## ***1.2 CA as an Interlanguage Study***

Linguistics typically focuses on the study of human languages, whether living, extinct, or recorded in written form. Some branches of linguistics, however, specialize in analyzing particular aspects of language rather than examining it as a whole. For instance, phonetics is concerned with the sounds used to convey messages, studying their nature, combinations, and functions. Similarly, dialectology investigates variations within a language, such as historical, geographical, and social dialects. A social dialectologist, for example, studies socially marked language varieties rather than the entire language itself. Interlanguage study is a branch of linguistics that does not focus on complete languages but instead explores the development and evolution of language systems. This field examines how languages emerge rather than analyzing their final forms. Contrastive analysis (CA) is part of interlanguage study, which adopts a diachronic (evolutionary) approach. Unlike De Saussure's historical concept of diachrony, which spans generations, interlanguage study examines language change within an individual's lifetime (ontogeny).

A notable example of this is infant language acquisition, where a child progresses from no knowledge of a language to mastering it by around five years old. However, since only one language is involved, this is not strictly interlanguage study. A clearer case is second-language learning, where a monolingual individual transitions to bilingualism, involving both a first language (L1) and a second language (L2). Another related branch is translation theory, which focuses on converting texts between languages rather than language learning itself. This can involve human translators or machine systems.

Interlanguage studies can be divided into three main categories:

1. Translation theory: Focuses on transforming texts from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL).
2. Error analysis: Investigates mistakes learners make while acquiring a second language.
3. Contrastive analysis (CA): Examines the process by which a monolingual individual becomes bilingual.

These studies focus on the intermediate stage between languages, where learners develop evolving systems called "approximative systems" or "transitional dialects." These systems progress step by step, with each stage having unique features while sharing similarities with preceding and succeeding stages. This process represents the learner's gradual journey toward language mastery.

## *CA as 'Pure' or 'Applied' Linguistics*

The distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' linguistics is essential when discussing Contrastive Analysis (CA). Pure linguistics focuses on theoretical research, while applied linguistics deals with practical language-related issues, such as language teaching. Some scholars, like Corder (1973), argue that applied linguistics is not a science but a practical application of pure linguistic theories. Others, including Malmberg (1971), contend that applied linguistics should be recognized as a science in its own right due to its reliance on multiple disciplines like psychology and sociology. CA draws heavily on applied linguistics because it assesses how linguistic knowledge is used to address language learning problems. While pure linguistics often focuses on identifying language universals to achieve theoretical efficiency, it occasionally engages in CA-like activities to verify linguistic claims across different languages. This book emphasizes 'applied CA,' which aims to enhance language teaching by understanding language interference and differences. Unlike pure linguistics, which treats CA as a peripheral activity, applied linguistics considers it a central and practical component of language pedagogy.

## *CA and Bilingualism*

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is described as a form of "interlingual" study, similar to the study of bilingualism. Bilingualism focuses on the possession of two languages, either by individuals (individual bilingualism) or societies (societal bilingualism). CA, however, focuses on how a monolingual becomes bilingual, often referred to as "incipient bilingualism." Historically, CA gained prominence with Lado's *Linguistics across Cultures* (1957), influenced by earlier works on immigrant bilingualism by Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1956). Although some argue that Weinreich and Haugen studied how the second language affected the native language, CA focuses on how the native language influences the learning of a foreign language (FL).

Weinreich observed that the mother tongue often resists interference more strongly than the second language, supporting CA's focus on NL-FL directionality. Unlike Weinreich and Haugen, who explored long-term generational language effects, CA deals with short-term language acquisition and interference. Despite the distinction between these studies, evidence shows similarities between long-term language change and individual language acquisition. Processes like pidginization and creolization mirror stages in FL learning, involving simplification followed by gradual assimilation to the target language. These insights have significant implications for language teaching, which are explored further in the discussion of CA's pedagogical applications.

