

The background of the entire book cover is a repeating pattern of small, light green, five-pointed stars on a white background.

Contrasting Languages

The Scope of Contrastive Linguistics

by

Tomasz P. Krzeszowski

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If the book suffers from inaccuracies, misinterpretations, and other flaws, it is partly because its author did not pay sufficient heed to the illuminating comments of its critics. Assuming total responsibility, the author apologizes to both: the critics, for not listening carefully enough, and to the readers, for obliging them to endure the remaining inadequacies.

Gdańsk, March 1988

Tomasz P. Krzeszowski

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Introduction

Contrastive studies do not enjoy much respect among linguists. Although many scholars of repute occasionally or systematically do practise what, loosely speaking, falls within the domain of contrastive studies by evoking cross-language evidence to support some theoretical claims (for example, R. Lakoff 1972, Comrie 1976, or Siewierska 1984), they only do so compelled by general linguistic motivation rather than by the requirements imposed by the rules of an altogether different game called contrastive linguistics.

Those who, by their own admission, undertake contrastive studies only involve themselves in that part which we shall presently refer to as contrastive analysis proper, paying insufficient heed to matters of principle, which motivate the analyses and provide them with methodological tools. In any case, the emphasis falls on actual practice and applications to the detriment of the theory and methodology of contrastive studies. Whatever issues arise in connection with these latter two aspects of contrastive studies, they are treated only marginally, as it were, in passing, and without sufficient attention paid to matters of finer detail. Consequently, the number of works explicitly and exclusively devoted to the theory and methodology of contrastive studies is negligible (but see Di Pietro 1971 and James 1980).

For some years, I have been engaged in providing contrastive studies with a more rigorous format. Several other linguists have advanced illuminating comments and criticisms, notably Bouton (1976), Chesterman (1980), James (1980), and, most extensively, Van Buren (1976). Thus, although only embryonically, something that might be called a methodology of contrastive studies has begun to emerge.

The present book attempts to bring under one cover some discussions and controversies connected with contrastive studies, to suggest possible answers to some critical comments, and to provide a synthetic outlook on the state of the art of contrastive studies with some modest suggestions of improvement.

Contrastive studies have a very long history. As early as ca. 1000 A. D. Aelfric wrote his *Grammatica*, a grammar of Latin and English, based

on the implicit assumption that the knowledge of grammar of one language may facilitate the learning of another language.

Among later grammarians, John Hewes, in the 17th century, was the first to explicitly express the view that the knowledge of the native grammar can not only facilitate learning a foreign language but also interfere with it. In his *A perfect survey of the English tongue taken according to the use and analogie of the Latine*, published in 1624, he devoted a long introductory section to presenting fundamentals of English in order to provide the learner with a "right knowledge or censure of their owne Mother tongue, in regard it holdeth a great difference in it selfe from the dialect of the Latine". Having provided some intricate contrastive analyses of Latin and English, Hewes provides numerous translational exercises to counteract what appear to be the effects of negative transfer, focusing his attention on those phenomena which are different in Latin and English.

Many other grammarians, like Howel(l) (1662), Coles (1675), and Lewis (1670?) applied the idea of facilitation (positive transfer in modern terms) by adjusting their grammars of English or of Latin to the needs of speakers of various native languages. It is very interesting to note that those early contrastive studies were motivated in almost the same way as modern contrastive studies in the United States were motivated. As early as 1670, Mark Lewis wrote the following words:

The most facil (sic!) way of introducing any in a Tongue unknown is to show what Grammar it hath beyond, or short of his Mother tongue; following that Maxime, to proceed a noto ad ignotum, making what we know, a step to what we are to lean (sic!).

One wonders whether nearly three centuries later Charles C. Fries was aware of these words, when he wrote the following:

The most efficient 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 (Fries 1945: 9).

So, although the word "contrast" with reference to different phenomena across languages had not appeared until the end of the 18th century, when James Pickbourne (1789: 18) first used it ("I thought it would be useful to *contrast* [italics supplied] the English verb with the verb in other languages"), comparisons of languages for pedagogical purposes probably go to the very beginnings of foreign language teach-

ing, while systematic written records of such procedures go back to at least the 15th century (cf. Krzeszowski 1985, 1986a, and in preparation; Meech 1935).

The early contrastive analysts did not concern themselves with methodological problems, although they did work out a method of comparison known as the "sign theory", the first method in contrastive studies (Krzeszowski 1985). For many years contrastive studies were practised and applied in the classroom in a more or less intuitive way, *toutes proportions gardées*, like folk medicine, without much theory and without much explanation.

But modern linguistic theories that began to flourish in the 20th century could not fail to affect the state of affairs in contrastive studies. Interest in methodology and theory of contrastive studies began to grow. Linguistic explorations into the nature of language, its complex, multilayer, and hierarchical structure, its systematic but changing nature, its function in communication, and its relation to the human mind became a subject of very close scrutiny of modern linguistics. This is not to say that many of these problems never arose before. For centuries, people wrote grammars (including contrastive grammars) and for centuries they were interested in how languages reflect human thoughts. But modern linguistic theories have given new dimensions to old problems and have created new problems (cf. Fisiak 1975 b; Fisiak – Lipińska-Grzegorek – Zabrocki 1978). Obvious things ceased to be obvious, and completely new approaches to language were proposed (e. g., generative grammar). Modern linguistic theories have made contrastive analysts sensitive to methodological and theoretical problems in their own field. Contrastive studies began to aspire to the status of a rigorous scientific discipline. What was once a relatively simple, intuition-based procedure, began to assume the format of an algorithm, which culminated in the attempt to construct Contrastive Generative Grammar (see Chapter VIII). The rigorous, mathematical approach to contrastive studies has revealed a number of thorny problems which at best make such efforts extremely difficult and at worst make them hopeless. Ironically, the attempt to give contrastive studies a rigorous, mathematical format could turn out to be self-defeating: it could reveal the impossibility of conducting formalized contrastive studies (cf. Van Buren 1976: 315).

The theoretical problems which bedevil contrastive studies can be summarized as three paradoxes: the grammatical paradox, the semantic paradox, and the pedagogical paradox.

The grammatical paradox

Any grammatical contrastive studies performed without reference (at least implicit) to meaning are doomed to failure. Yet, witness another paradox, the revival of contrastive studies in the 20th century was promoted by rather extreme versions of American structuralism, in which the semantic aspect of language was removed from the mainstream of linguistic analysis.

What makes a purely structural approach to contrastive studies theoretically impossible is the fact that any comparison presupposes similarity as *tertium comparationis* (TC) against which differences can be stated. Therefore, languages are structurally comparable in the extent to which they are structurally similar. It must be remembered that early structuralists were not yet familiar with the notion of underlying structure nor with the notion of semantic representation from which, according to later theories, surface structures in various languages are derived. These concepts were acknowledged and appreciated in contrastive studies as soon as they had made their way in the linguistic world. Originally, however, contrastive studies concerned only those structures which later became known as surface structures.

If one considers a taxonomy of surface structures in various languages, it is possible to envisage a sort of a cline of similarities for every pair of languages within the taxonomy. Theoretically, at one extreme, there will be a pair of languages so radically different that no common set of grammatical categories can be established for them, and at the other extreme, there will be two languages identical in all respects. In-between, there will be a spectrum of pairs of languages with varying degrees of similarities. In such a hypothetical cline, the languages situated at the two extremes would be completely incomparable in purely structural terms. The two languages that would have nothing in common could not be compared since there would be nothing that could serve as *tertium comparationis*. The two structurally identical languages at the other extreme, being identical, could not be compared either since there would be nothing different to consider.

Graphically the cline can be represented as in Fig. 1, where L_1 and L_2 have no features in common, while L_n and L_{n+1} are identical in all respects. In fact, Fig. 1 represents a fragment of a more complex situation since, in principle, the number of totally different languages and totally identical languages may be more than two, and the respective numbers of such

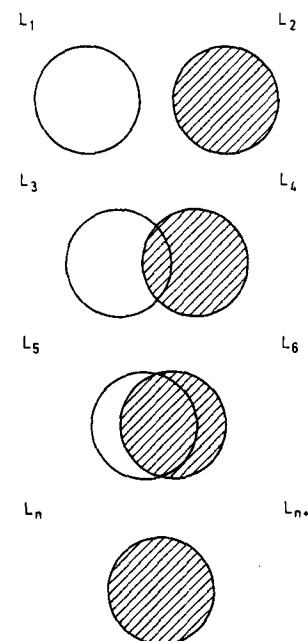


Figure 1. Languages in a cline ranging from those with nothing in common to those that are identical.

languages cannot be determined *a priori*. Therefore, more accurately, our cline should be represented by the following formulas: Let U stand for the set of all possible human languages

$$U = [L_1, L_2 \dots L_n]$$

and let σ stand for the similarity ratio, i. e.,

$$\sigma = s/d$$

where s stands for the number of similar elements and where d stands for the number of different elements,¹ and where both s and $d > 0$, in order for the L 's to be comparable.

Let us assume, further, that reliable descriptions of all the languages constituting U are available, and that these descriptions are all made within the same theoretical framework or a set of mutually compatible frameworks such that equivalence can be established for these frame-

works. Provided these conditions are met, all languages in U can be arranged pairwise on the scale of σ from n to m , where $n > 0$ and $m < \infty$.

The grammatical paradox consists in the resulting situation, viz., that languages are comparable only to the extent to which they are similar; thus, the lower the σ for a given pair of languages, the less comparable they are. It follows that the most voluminous contrastive analyses should be performed on those languages for which σ would be the highest, while contrastive analysis becomes increasingly impossible with the diminishing σ . In either direction, purely structural contrastive studies reach an impossible impasse, which cannot be overcome, even in principle. The additional paradox, as we pointed out earlier, is that contrastive studies in the 20th century began to flourish within the structural framework.

The paradox underlying such studies led to the situation in which, thriving as they were, they were at the same time completely atheoretical.

The semantic paradox

Even before the difficulties connected with comparability within the structural framework had been formulated, practising contrastive analysts abandoned the strictly structural positions in favour of employing semantic criteria in establishing comparability. At first, semantics was employed implicitly as translational equivalence, the term borrowed from the theory of translation as formulated by Catford (1965: 27–34) and used in the context of contrastive studies by Halliday et al. (1964: 111–134). Translation equivalence was employed as the main criterion in deciding what constructions and sentences in various languages are comparable. The following principle was formulated:

If the items are not at least sometimes equivalent in translation, they are not worth comparing (Halliday et al. 1964: 115).

This clearly implied the presence of semantics on the contrastive scene, since translational equivalence presupposes at least some degree of semantic resemblance: two sentences are mutually translatable if they share at least some semantic properties.

Later, a more radical hypothesis was formulated. It claimed that equivalent sentences across languages have identical semantic representations. This hypothesis was connected with the so-called universal base hypothesis (Bach 1968: 91; Fillmore 1968: 51 ff.), which claimed that all

sentences in all languages are derived from a universal semantic base, for which various metalanguages of representations were proposed, such as a modified predicate calculus (Fillmore 1968), a system of roles (Fillmore 1968), or a system of labelled graphs (Krzyszowski 1974). All these proposals had one thing in common: they assumed the existence of some universal, underlying semantic representation, free of language-specific syntactic categories, from which all sentences in all languages are derived through language-specific categorical and syntactic rules. These rules can be compared and contrasted in various languages, which provides a new dimension for contrastive studies (see also Lipińska 1975: 50 ff.).

The hypothesis concerning the identity of semantic representations of equivalent sentences leads to the semantic paradox, which is based on the fact that what is identical is not subject to comparison, and what is different is not comparable. Since equivalent sentences across languages have identical semantic representations, it follows that differences occur at less abstract levels, due to the operation of different, language-specific grammatical rules. Therefore, languages differ at more superficial levels, while in their deeper structure they are increasingly similar, and at the level of semantic representation they are presumably universally identical. Thus, the most interesting linguistic insights and generalizations provide the least promise for contrastive studies since with the increasing universality of the grammar (whether expressed in terms of the universal base hypothesis or in quite different terms, such as more recent versions of the standard theory, as expounded by Chomsky 1975, 1982, 1984), there is less and less for contrastive studies to deal with. Here is how Preston formulates this paradox:

That the drive for universality should deny comparative detail between even related languages should seem paradoxical is understandable at a superficial level, but if we recall Chomsky's assertion that universal grammar will eventually leave only idiosyncratic odds and ends and irregularity behind in particular grammars, the conclusion that better grammars ... provide less and less detail for contrastive analysis is self-evident (Preston 1975: 69).

Therefore, what is left for comparison are essentially incomparable idiosyncracies, such as suppletion, pronominal irregularities, morphological curiosities, and specific selection features, as the only items of any interest in the grammar of a particular language. According to Preston, even if contrastivists do trouble themselves with all these idiosyncratic details across languages, they will "make no real contribution to linguistics" (Preston 1975: 65).

The pedagogical paradox

Accepting the inevitable conclusion that what is universal must be familiar to all foreign-language learners from their native languages and constitutes the main focus of interest of theoretical linguists, we must also face the conclusion that what remains to be learned are "non-comparable bits of peculiar and idiosyncratic information generally ignored in contrastive studies" (Preston 1975: 65).

So the pedagogical paradox is that what theoretical linguists consider as trivial and uninteresting may be of utmost pedagogical importance. Language teachers all over the world are particularly sensitive to errors in the realm of morphology, transgressions against rare, exceptional forms or unique pronunciations. All these phenomena, mainly connected with surface structures, traditionally constitute the learner's hell and, if excessively focused on, occasion many a failure in learning foreign languages in classroom situations. Languages abounding in such phenomena have the reputation of being "difficult" in contrast to those languages which are relatively free of such surface phenomena as inflections.

Neither the semantic nor the pedagogical paradox undermine the validity of contrastive studies since there is no way of telling what is universal and what is idiosyncratic without conducting thorough contrastive studies of as many languages as possible. One cannot accept the view that

a thorough investigation of [!] large number of languages is really unnecessary for ... the universal features necessary to explanatory adequacy are natural by-products of close, descriptively adequate work on the structure of a particular language (Preston 1975: 67).

T. Zabrocki presents some convincing evidence demonstrating that certain theoretical linguistic hypotheses cannot be verified without reference to cross-language data. In fact, Zabrocki is of the opinion that in order to test any claim assigning a universal value to particular syntactic rules or categories one should ideally test these claims "on a number of, possibly all, languages, within general theoretical linguistic studies" (Zabrocki 1976: 101).

The monograph presented here attempts to resolve these paradoxes by suggesting such methods in contrastive studies which would be theoretically plausible and practically useful. In this way problems and controversies beclouding contrastive studies may lose some of their edge, which will give contrastive studies a chance to survive as an art, if not as an algorithm.

Chapter I

What is contrastive linguistics?

When two or more languages are compared, it is possible to focus either on similarities or on differences.¹ When a learner learns a new language, he usually focuses attention on differences and remains largely unaware of similarities. If he discovers some similarities, he is amused and surprised since he ordinarily does not expect to find them. Grammarians, on the other hand, quite early became interested in discovering what various languages have in common, in the belief that making such similarities explicit for the learner may facilitate the process of foreign language learning. Early contrastive studies were motivated precisely by this assumption (Krzyszowski 1985: 485).

There are several approaches to linguistic comparisons. The 19th century witnessed the development of historical linguistics and the related field of comparative historical studies, which aimed at finding the common genetic background for whole groups of languages. Another field of linguistic comparisons emerged when languages were grouped on the basis of various characteristics which they share. The area of linguistics concerned with such comparisons is called typological linguistics. Languages grouped together in the same typological group need not be genetically (historically) related. For example, English and Chinese, which are not genetically related, share a large number of grammatical properties, such as relatively fixed and grammatically constrained word order, paucity of inflections, and prominence of function words. These shared features place the two languages quite close in the typological groupings, in spite of the genetic distance separating them.

Contrastive linguistics is connected with yet another kind of comparison: noting and describing similarities and differences in languages rather than grouping them genetically or typologically. Ultimately, of course, all kinds of comparisons may yield results which are relevant to linguistic theory in general, as in the search for linguistic universals. Therefore, differences between typological and contrastive linguistics are largely a matter of focus: typological linguistics focuses on clusters of languages

united by some common feature or features, while contrastive linguistics focuses on pairs of languages and explores similarities as well as differences between them.

Contrastive linguistics, like descriptive and historical linguistics, is dependent on theoretical linguistics since no exact and reliable exploration of facts can be conducted without a theoretical background, providing concepts, hypotheses, and theories which enable the investigator to describe the relevant facts and to account for them in terms of significant generalizations. But contrastive linguistics is also dependent on descriptive linguistics since no comparison of languages is possible without their prior description. In brief, then, contrastive linguistics is an area of linguistics in which a linguistic theory is applied to a comparative description of two or more languages, which need not be genetically or typologically related. The success of these comparisons is strictly dependent on the theory applied. As will be seen later, in extreme cases, the linguistic framework itself may preclude comparison. Therefore, contrastive linguistics imposes certain demands on the form and nature of the linguistic theory which is to be "applied" in such comparisons. In many less extreme situations the results of comparisons are strictly dependent on the theoretical framework adopted in the comparisons (see Chapter VI).

Originally, all contrastive studies were pedagogically motivated and oriented. In recent years, however, distinctions have been drawn between "theoretical" and "applied" contrastive studies (see Fisiak 1981: 2-9). According to Fisiak

Theoretical CS give an exhaustive account of the differences and similarities between two or more languages, provide an adequate model for their comparison, determine how and which elements are comparable, thus defining such notions as congruence, equivalence, correspondence, etc. ... Applied CS are part of applied linguistics. Drawing on the findings of theoretical contrastive studies they provide a framework for the comparison of languages, selecting whatever information is necessary for a specific purpose, e.g. teaching, bilingual analysis, translating, etc. (Fisiak 1981: 9).

In Chapter XII we shall investigate to what extent this is a valid distinction. Assuming, however, that "applied contrastive studies" are sufficiently distinct from "theoretical contrastive studies", the former, as part of applied linguistics, especially when related to teaching, must necessarily depend not only on theoretical, descriptive, and comparative

linguistics but also on other disciplines relevant to teaching; among them are psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, didactics, psychology of learning and teaching, and possibly other areas which may be important in ways difficult to evaluate at the present moment.

Finally, some comments are needed about terminology. Although the word "contrastive" is used most frequently with reference to cross-language comparisons of the sort described above, various authors have been trying to replace it with other terms, such as "cross-linguistic studies", "confrontative studies", and some even more esoteric terms, for example, "diaglossic grammar" (Dingwall 1964a), which enjoyed but a brief existence. The word "contrastive" is likely to outlive all the competing terms since it appears in titles of monographs and collections of papers on the subject (cf. James 1980; Fisiak 1980, 1981, 1984).

Terminological complications manifest themselves in a rich array of nouns which have been attested in collocation with the adjective "contrastive". In the current literature we find such terms as "contrastive linguistics", "contrastive studies", "contrastive analysis", and "contrastive grammar".

Although consistency is certainly wanting, there is an observable tendency to select a particular collocation to refer to particular domains of cross-language comparisons. And so the term "contrastive studies" appears to be the least marked, as it fits all contexts in which other collocations with "contrastive" are also appropriate. The term "contrastive linguistics" is also often used with reference to the whole field of cross-language comparisons, with a slight tendency to focus on those instances when theory or methodology of comparisons come into play. The collocation "contrastive analysis" is often used interchangeably with the above two terms, but there is a tendency to restrict its scope of reference to comparison proper. In that restricted sense "contrastive analysis" would refer to the third of the three steps in classical contrastive studies, viz. description, juxtaposition, comparison proper, respectively (see Chapter IV).

Finally, the collocation "contrastive grammar" is often used to refer to the product of contrastive studies, as a bilingual grammar highlighting differences across languages. In this sense, "contrastive grammars" constitute an outcome of "contrastive linguistics".

Whether these observations are accurate or not, it would be desirable to aspire towards some consistency in the use of these terms along the lines suggested in the above generalizations.

Unfortunately, these observations do not exhaust all the contexts in which the adjective “contrastive” appears. Many other collocations can be encountered in an astonishingly varied assortment. Each such collocation consists of the adjective “contrastive” followed by all manner of nouns; so we get “contrastive pragmalinguistics”, “contrastive sociolinguistics”, “applied contrastive studies”, “contrastive discourse analysis”, “contrastive pragmatics”, “contrastive syntax”, “pragmatic contrastive analysis”, “contrastive generative grammar”, “contrastive phonostylistics”, “contrastive language studies”, “contrastive lexicon”, “contrastive considerations”, “transformational contrastive studies”, “theoretical contrastive studies”, “classical contrastive studies”, “deeper and deeper contrastive analysis”, “contrastive description”, and quite a few more.

The existing confusion is typical of a field where insufficient attention has been paid to various matters of principle. Preoccupied with analytic details, investigators often lose sight of general distinctions and aims of their research, and they do not question certain fundamental assumptions, which are often taken for granted. In contrastive studies, the situation is further aggravated by the deeply-nourished conviction of many practitioners in the field that theoretical problems of relevance arise and can be solved only in the domain of pure and descriptive linguistics. In the view of these linguists, contrastive studies are merely a set of procedures involving mechanical application of various findings in theoretical and descriptive linguistics. Implicit in this position is the belief that contrastive studies do not require any special theoretical framework to be fully effective and to bring forth whatever results are expected of such analyses.

There is a handful of linguists concerned with contrastive analyses, who occasionally feel guilty of the “sin of omission”, and they stop to ponder over certain vagaries of comparative procedures, trying to see them in more general terms than those available from actual practice (e.g., Van Buren 1974; Schwarze 1978; Kühlwein 1983). These few investigators are aware that contrastive linguistics requires its own theoretical framework in addition to specific linguistic models employed in the description of the compared languages.

One of the purposes of this book is to remedy this situation by highlighting and discussing some crucial issues which bedevil contrastive linguistics. We are going to address notorious problems such as *tertium comparationis*, equivalence, the relation between linguistic theory and

contrastive linguistics as well as between contrastive linguistics and foreign language teaching. With respect to the existing terminological jungle, referred to earlier on, we are going to suggest a taxonomy of contrastive studies, which will provide motivation for some terms and render other terms superfluous.

Chapter II

Tertium comparationis¹

To compare them would be tantamount to putting ten-ton lorries and banana skins in the same class on the grounds that neither ought to be left on footpaths!

Carl James

One of the reasons why contrastive studies continue to perform the role of the Cindarella of linguistics is the fact that its most fundamental concept, *tertium comparationis*, remains as hazy as ever. The existing contrastive analyses involve various platforms of interlinguistic reference, determined by specific linguistic models which they employ and specific levels of analysis which they embrace. Thus different *tertium comparationis* are used for comparisons in lexicology, in phonology, and in syntax. In few of these studies is explicit mention of any *tertium comparationis* made or any justification for a specific choice presented.²

All comparisons involve the basic assumption that the objects to be compared share something in common, against which differences can be stated. This common platform of reference is called *tertium comparationis*. Moreover, any two or more objects can be compared with respect to various features and, as a result, the compared objects may turn out to be similar in some respects but different in others. Thus, a square and a rectangle are similar in that both consist of four sides at right angles. But they are also different, since in a square, but not in a rectangle, the four sides are of equal length.³ If we compare squares and rectangles with respect to the angles, we ascertain that the two types of figures are identical. If, on the other hand, we consider the length of their sides, we find them to be different. Depending on the platform of reference (or *tertium comparationis*) which we adopt, the same objects turn out to be either similar or different.

In cross-language comparisons, the choice of *tertium comparationis* will also constitute the determining factor in establishing similarities and differences between the phenomena compared (cf. Lipińska 1975: 48; Fisiak et al. 1978: 15). Since language is a complex hierarchical structure, operating at various levels of organization, and since it manifests itself

as texts produced by its users, every aspect of language at every level of organization, as well as every text and its constituents, can undergo comparison with equivalent elements in another language. Therefore, various kinds of contrastive studies can be distinguished, depending on the *tertium comparationis* adopted and the kind of equivalence involved. Before we attempt to classify contrastive studies, let us take a closer look at various possible *tertium comparationis*.

Theoretical discussions tend to be limited to only two types: formal correspondence and semantic equivalence (e.g., Lado 1957: 52–53; Spalatin 1969; Ivir 1969, 1970). Even a cursory glance at the wealth of the existing contrastive studies suffices to notice that these two types of *tertium comparationis* are not the only ones that are used in practice. Formal correspondence and semantic equivalence can serve as *tertium comparationis* for certain types of contrastive studies, such as syntactic and lexical. Other types of contrastive studies, for example phonological, pragmatic, or quantitative, must be based on other *tertium comparationis*. Moreover, neither contrastive studies based on formal correspondence nor those based on semantic equivalence are free from difficulties. For example, it has been pointed out that formal likeness alone cannot serve as a *tertium comparationis* without support from semantic equivalence (Liston 1970: 44; Lipińska-Grzegorek 1977: 1–10). At best a comparison based on formal criteria alone is incomplete, at worst it cannot be performed at all, and in many cases it is misleading (see also Spalatin 1969: 31–34).

If, for example, one compares Polish and English personal pronouns, a formal analysis will ascertain the equivalence between the English *you* and the Polish *ty/wy* and will be accurate as far as it goes. But such an analysis is incomplete as it leaves out such forms as *Pan/Pani* and other possible equivalents of *you*. These equivalents can only be established if other than formal criteria are employed (see Chapter IV). English articles cannot be compared to anything in those languages in which there are no articles, if only formal criteria are considered. Finally, in the case of such phenomena as the present perfect tense in English and *passé composé* in French, a formal analysis is misleading since the formal similarity is not matched, at least in this case, by semantic similarity, which creates a kind of situation which often causes considerable learning problems (see Politzer 1968). Therefore, it is generally recognized that a contrastive analysis based on purely formal criteria falls short of both theoretical and practical expectations. We shall return to this problem in Chapter VI.

Somewhat less obviously, a contrastive analysis based on semantic similarity alone can also be inadequate and misleading. In the contrastive practice, semantic equivalence is often erroneously identified with translation equivalence:

To establish that these [systems of deictics] are comparable, we first need to show their contextual equivalence; this can be done most simply by reference to translation (Halliday et al. 1964: 115).

Chapter VII will discuss differences between semantic equivalence and translation. It will be shown that translation equivalents are often semantically non-equivalent. At this point, it must only be noted that semantic equivalence must be constrained formally, while translation equivalence may, but does not have to, be thus constrained. When one translates, one departs from semantic equivalence due to three types of reasons: (1) errors in translation; (2) formal properties of respective languages; and (3) what is loosely called “stylistic” reasons. These three types of reasons lead to situations in which actual translation practice, with the exception of that concerned with legal texts, seldom involves semantic equivalents in the sense defined below in Chapter VII. This means that only some translations can be used as data for systematic contrastive studies (cf. Ivir 1969), while translation as a method of contrasting must be regarded with caution:

Translation must be viewed amorously as the rendition of a text from one language to another. This is translation from the standpoint of *la parole*: the text, the act of speech or writing, is the thing. Or it may be viewed as a systematic comparison of two languages: this is translation from the standpoint of *la langue* (Bolinger 1966: 130).

In fact, the use of translation in systematic contrastive studies is highly limited:

Translation equivalence serves merely to help us isolate items of structure with shared meanings in the two languages (Ivir 1970: 15).

Even if we do distinguish translation equivalence from semantic equivalence and base contrastive studies on the latter, we still face problems. As has been stated earlier, semantic equivalence involves “formal” constraints. Thus, semantic equivalence is inherently connected with at least some degree of formal correspondence. But the meaning of both concepts is richer than is commonly recognized in contrastive studies. For instance, “formal” can be extended to cover the entire plane of expression (cf.

Hjelmslev 1961: 59), whereas in most American studies the word "formal" is restricted to word order, function words, inflections, affixation, and suprasegmentals. In a broader perspective, "formal" would also embrace such aspects of expression as aliteration, rhymes, and rhythm. Many of these "formal" properties would find their place in the study of functionally (pragmatically) equivalent texts (see Chapter XI).

The notion "semantic" is also often extended to cover matters of pragmatics, especially by those authors who identify semantic equivalence with translation equivalence:

Our experience is that languages can be effectively contrasted only on semantic basis, specifically, on the basis of translation equivalence (Spalatin 1969: 34).

In reality many authors have shown that semantic equivalence is not a necessary prerequisite of a good translation (cf. Rülker 1973: 29–35; Krzeszowski 1974: 13, 1981a; Kopczyński 1980: 41–42). What is expected of a good translation is pragmatic or functional equivalence (see Chapter V). It cannot be denied that pragmatic equivalence can serve as *tertium comparationis* for contrastive analyses of such matters as the structure of discourse, stylistic properties, and quantitative aspects of texts. But syntactic contrastive studies, the primary concern of earlier contrastive studies, must be conducted within the limits of the semantic component of the language, or more specifically that part of the semantic component which can be systematically and predictably correlated with the grammatical structure of sentences. This restricted sense of "semantic" still embraces some aspects of meaning which are traditionally relegated to "pragmatics" or "interpersonal function" of sentences (Halliday 1970: 143). According to Halliday, the systems of mood and modality are precisely those systems which relate sentences to their interpersonal functions. It seems obvious that the notion "sentence semantics" should cover those elements of "pragmatics" which can be correlated with the structure of sentences, even if consistency in this area is definitely out of the question; declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences do not necessarily perform the functions of statements, questions, and commands, respectively. In so far as some correlation between form and function does exist, those "functional" aspects of sentence structure constitute the border area between pragmatics and semantics and should be included in any semanto-syntactic contrastive studies (for details see Krzeszowski 1974). Therefore, James (1980) suggests that for the purposes of contrastive analyses translation equivalents should be limited to those which are

both semantically and pragmatically equivalent. However, this proposal also raises doubts.

Presumably, what James means by "semantic" refers to Halliday's "ideational" function of sentences, while Halliday's "interpersonal" and possibly "textual" functions fall under "pragmatic". Under James' proposal many sentences across languages would exhibit both "ideational" (semantic) and "interpersonal" (pragmatic) equivalence; yet one would hardly wish to use them as data for syntactic contrastive studies. For example:

- (1) *Did he kill that dog?*
- (2) *Zabił tego psa?*
(literally: 'killed-he that dog?')

are equivalent, both ideationally (agent, transitive verb, patient) and interpersonally (general question); yet, they falsely suggest a relationship between syntactic types represented by (1) and (2) in English and Polish. A systematic syntactic equivalence would have to be ascertained between (1) and (3) rather than between (1) and (2):

- (3) *Czy on zabił tego psa?*
(literally: 'whether he killed that dog?')

since (3) typically represents interrogative sentences in Polish, just as (1) is a typical interrogative sentence in English.

In an earlier work (Krzeszowski 1981b: 123), I suggested that syntactic contrastive studies should be performed on data restricted in the following way: a contrastive grammar will take as its primary data (to be assigned the status of semanto-syntactic equivalence) the closest approximations to grammatical word-for-word translations and their synonymous paraphrases, if such forms exist. Such a constraining of primary data as the basis for syntactic contrastive studies bypasses the inherent difficulties of the proposals suggesting the use of unrestricted semantic equivalence as the basis for comparison. Accepting any translation as a possible basis for syntactic contrastive studies leads to two mutually exclusive and undesirable consequences. Either (1) no comparative generalizations become possible, as the number of well-formed translations of a particular sentence into another language cannot be predicted *a priori*; or (2) purely arbitrary decisions concerning formal correspondences in unconstrained translations must be made. Any non-arbitrary decision involves circularity: the investigator has to assume formal correspondences on the basis of syntactic and/or morphological features which the compared texts

share. This circularity is even reflected in the use of the word "comparable" in certain contrastive grammars. For example, Stockwell et al. thus write about determiners in English and Spanish:

Both English and Spanish have two sets of determiners, commonly referred to as definite and indefinite articles. In many respects they are *comparable* [emphasis is my own]; in others they are different (Stockwell et al. 1965: 65).

The circularity consists in the following: we compare in order to see what is similar and what is different in the compared materials; we can only compare items which are in some respect similar, but we cannot use similarity as an independent criterion in deciding how to match items for comparison since similarity (or difference) is to result from the comparison and not to motivate it.

To avoid this undesirable circularity, in deciding about formal correspondences, one needs a common *tertium comparationis* outside the formal properties. The underlying meaning of the closest approximations to well-formed word-for-word translations provides such a *tertium comparationis*. Sentences and constructions sharing identical semantic representations at the level of sentence semantics (but necessarily exhibiting certain idiosyncratic differences at the level of word-semantics) are semanto-syntactically equivalent and constitute a constrained set of data for syntactic contrastive studies. The approach through constrained translations does not require the initial recognition of shared syntactic categories as *tertium comparationis* for syntactic contrastive studies. Such a recognition would illegitimately anticipate the results of contrastive studies. A detailed proposal along these lines will be presented in Chapter VIII. (See also Krzeszowski 1974 and 1979).

Summarizing, let us say that formal properties alone do not provide an adequate *tertium comparationis* for syntactic contrastive studies, while a semantic *tertium comparationis* must be constrained through restricting the scope of translation equivalents as primary linguistic data for syntactic contrastive studies.

Such constrained but rigorous contrastive studies have a very limited pedagogical relevance. Any extension of the scope of contrastive studies to make them pedagogically more useful increases the likelihood of their becoming less rigorous and hence less respectable as a "scientific" procedure. One has to look for ways of extending the scope of contrastive studies without losing any of the rigour characterizing syntactic contrastive studies. Formal and semantic *tertium comparationis*, discussed so far,

will not suffice as bases for extended contrastive studies. For example, phonetic and phonological contrastive studies cannot rely on semantic equivalence as *tertium comparationis*.

The crucial notion in identifying various kinds of *tertium comparationis* and determining their character is the concept of equivalence or the relation which provides justifications for why things are chosen for comparison, keeping in mind that only equivalent items across languages are comparable. The various principles motivating equivalence and, *eo ipso*, contrastive studies will provide grounds for dividing *tertium comparationis* and, consequently, contrastive studies into various categories, each being connected with a specific kind of equivalence which motivates the comparisons (see Chapter III). In other words, equivalence is the principle whereby *tertium comparationis* is established inasmuch as only such elements are equivalent for which some *tertium comparationis* can be found, and the extent to which a *tertium comparationis* can be found for a particular pair of items across languages determines the extent to which these elements are equivalent. Thus, equivalence and *tertium comparationis* are two sides of the same coin.

Chapter III

Towards a classification of contrastive studies¹

Contrastive studies can be divided and subdivided according to various criterial principles. Fisiak's division into "theoretical" and "applied" contrastive studies is based partly on the aims of contrastive studies and partly on their methodology.² According to Fisiak, theoretical contrastive studies are performed for their own sake, while applied contrastive studies are performed for the purpose of some application. But Fisiak reinforces this division by claiming that applied contrastive studies are directional while theoretical contrastive studies are not. This roughly means that theoretical contrastive studies

do not investigate how a given category present in language A is represented in language B ... they look for the realization of a universal category X in both A and B (Fisiak et al. 1978: 10).

Another kind of taxonomy can be based on specific linguistic models applied in the description of languages involved in contrastive studies. Since contrastive studies can be conducted in a variety of models, we can speak of structural, transformational, stratificational, or systemic contrastive studies. Yet not all models are equally suitable as frameworks for contrastive studies. In extreme cases, a particular model may turn out to be almost totally useless (cf. Van Buren 1974: 293; Lipińska 1975: 7 ff.). A survey of some models as applied to contrastive studies and their evaluation in terms of their suitability as frameworks for contrastive studies will be presented in Chapter VI. It is important to note here that a taxonomy of contrastive studies based on criteria external to comparisons themselves can lend credence to linguistic theories and models rather than to contrastive studies. Therefore, external criteria will not be considered in the taxonomy which we are going to suggest later in this chapter.

An interesting though incomplete taxonomy of contrastive studies is presented by Di Pietro (1971: 17–19), who divides contrastive studies

into autonomous and generalized, on the one hand, and into taxonomic and operational, on the other.

In autonomous contrastive studies no conscious, explicit reference is made to any universal, underlying structure which the compared languages might share. In such contrastive studies each language is described independently and in its own right. In generalized models, explicit reference is made to those layers of structure which the compared languages share, not only on account of their typological or genetic similarity, but mainly because of the universal grammar which is believed to underlie all human languages.

The division into taxonomic and operational models pertains only to generalized models. Taxonomic models are restricted to stating similarities and differences across languages and to stating their "hierarchical importance". Operational models seek to formulate

a series of conversions performed on the source language in order to produce the forms of the goal language (Di Pietro 1971: 18).

This procedure would lead to the formulation, in linguistic terms, of the steps which would have to be taken by the learner to acquire a foreign language. Ideally such models would lead to the formulation of algorithms of foreign language acquisition.

From the pedagogical point of view, autonomous contrastive studies have not been of much use in the area of language teaching since neither the descriptive apparatus that they employ nor the results which they yield can be easily related to any psychological or pedagogical reality. On the other hand, operational models are extremely difficult, if at all possible, to construct since still not enough is known about both learners and grammars with relation to psychological reality.

In principle, Di Pietro's taxonomy could be augmented by generative models, i.e. such models which generate equivalent constructions and sentences across languages and assign appropriate structural descriptions, including similarities and differences, to the enumerated equivalents. A detailed proposal along these lines will be presented in Chapter VIII.

Since our own classification of contrastive studies is based on distinguishing various kinds of equivalence (and hence *tertium comparationis*), it is appropriate to mention Kühlwein's typology of equivalence, designed in connection with lexicological contrastive studies situated in the context of socio-semiotics (Kühlwein 1983). His typology embraces the following kinds of equivalence:

formal — based on linguistic structure;
derivational-semantic — connected with the "depth" of the derivation;
paraphrase procedure — which yields "regressum ad infinitum";
translation procedure — limited by truth conditions and culture-specific considerations; and
functional-communicative — involving "mental processes of cognition and associative connotative components" (Kühlwein 1983: 6).

This division suffers from the following shortcomings:

- a) It is not based on a set of homogeneous criteria: e.g., paraphrase procedure seems to be only loosely connected with contrastive studies;
- b) it does not mutually relate these various types of equivalence, nor does it suggest that there is a relationship;
- c) it leaves out certain other types of equivalence, for example, substantive equivalence;
- d) it does not explicitly relate the concept of equivalence to the concept of *tertium comparationis*, although, admittedly, Kühlwein is certainly aware of the importance of the relationship between the two concepts, at least in the preamble to his typology.

The taxonomy which we are going to present is intended to be free of these inadequacies. It is based on the assumption that various kinds of contrastive studies can be distinguished in a strict relation to various *tertium comparationis* adopted and, consequently, to various kinds of equivalence.

The first division is drawn between text-bound and systematic (or projective) contrastive studies. It is based on the familiar distinction between *la parole* and *la langue*. Text-bound studies involve comparisons of texts in two (or more) languages and do not go beyond such texts to generalizations about grammars, i.e. rules and systems that generate those texts. Projective contrastive studies are related to text-bound contrastive studies in the same way in which the study of language is related to the study of texts. Such studies go beyond primary linguistic data found in texts in order to grasp and formulate generalizations about various aspects of the compared languages.

At this point, it is useful to introduce the term *2-text*/'*turtekst*/ to refer to any pair of texts, written or oral, in two languages, which are used as data in contrastive studies. Every *2-text* can be described in terms of a