GENERAL

CONTRASTIVE STUDIES IN TWO PERSPECTIVES

MICHAEL SHARWOOD-SMITH

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

1.1. The aims of contrastive studies have been much discussed and will doubtless continue to be discussed. The discussion usually centres round two fundamental points of view: the theoretical and the practical. Theoretical aims include the desire to increase present knowledge within the field of linguistics while practical aims mainly relate to teaching and the construction of teaching materials. Most discussions end with the general agreement that contrastive studies shall try to contribute to the fulfilment of both theoretical and practical aims. However if contrastive studies are to be related to these very different fields of interest, they must be considered in two different ways, that is, in the linguistic perspective and in the perspective proper to language teaching. Furthermore it must be clearly specified exactly how these two perspectives may best be combined within one organised contrastive studies project. It becomes vital to examine the links — possible and desirable — between linguistics and language teaching as a whole to determine where contrastive studies fit in and in what way an exhaustive comparison of two or more languages can serve both the linguistic and the language teacher alike.

2.1. Linguistics has often been termed the *"scientific"* study of language. Its scientific character was stressed particularly in the earlier days of its growth as an autonomous discipline so as to contrast with the more humanistic and haphazard descriptions of language that had existed before. Also it must be admitted that linguists wished to identify themselves and their studies with the modern technological — "Zeitgeist". Nowadays a more mature view is

prevalent and linguistics is seen as belonging to a kind of midway area between the world of physics and chemistry and other natural sciences on the one hand and the humanities on the other. All the same, linguists adhere as closely as possible to scientific method and try to present their hypotheses, theories and descriptions in as objective and systematic a way as they can. To this extent linguistics is a science.

2.2. Linguistics, as a science, includes both theory and application. Some linguist may evolve a theory of language from which a description of one or more languages may follow. The theory is thus applied to a particular task and the result is a grammar. A modern grammar is then no longer a piecemeal description of some language based on some accepted and vaguely formulated principles but rather a fairly rigorous application of some theory. Any problems encountered in the application will have immediate consequences on the shape of the theory which may then have to be explicitly altered to account for the "data".

2.3. The term "applied linguistics" has been coined, probably on analogy with the applied sciences, to indicate certain applications of linguistics in more practical spheres of activity. However it is usually understood in the absence of further qualification as the application of linguistics in the field of language teaching. It is an unfortunate term nevertheless due the generality of the term "applied" which does not tell us exactly what is applied to what. It is reasonable to argue as, for example S. Pit. Corder does at Edinburgh, that the first application of linguistics is in fact the description of language. Using the description is a further and separate application which must not be confused with the first which is based on an abstract theory. The term "applied linguistics", although current, is therefore ambiguous.

2.4. In this paper applications of linguistics will be of two basic types[1]: first-order applications which follow directly from linguistic theory and second-order applications which involve considerations external to linguistics proper. Second-order applications help to constitute a number of "interdisciplines", that is, areas of interest which occur at the interface[2] between linguistics and some other area. For example the interface between linguistics and psychology results in the area called "psycholinguistics". In the same way we obtain a specification of what concerns among others sociolinguists, neurolinguists, mathematical linguists, computational linguists and, as will seen later, pedagogical linguists.

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[1] These two basic distinctions, which follow from Corder's criticisms at Edinburgh, are broad ones aiming at simplification and do not reflect the complex ways in which each field may relate to both linguistics and other associated fields.

[2] Professor Strevens uses this term at Essex University. The aim of the present paper is to emphasize the fact that semi-independent studies may be usefully set up at an interface rather than letting it remain a vague disputed no-man's land.

2.5. First-order applications of linguistic theory involve very detailed and explicit descriptions of language systems. The theory must be rigorously tested against the realities of language which the theory aims to account for in some way. Thus not only must the application be meticulous. It must also be exhaustive so that facts which the theory cannot account for are not conveniently set aside. A theory must be vulnerable according to scientific method and must be rejected or changed in the face of contradictory evidence. The theory and first-order application of the theory is dealt with in a scientific frame of reference and may be subsumed under the heading of linguistics or "the linguistic sciences"[3]. The comparison and contrasting of two or more languages may be undertaken within this perspective and the term contrastive linguistics is usually used to characterise it. This term of course denotes a type of linguistics and not an interface between two disciplines.

2.6. Second-order applications, that is, applications of linguistics (theory and first-order applications) combine interests of two disciplines. A psychologist is interested in language behaviour as a part of general human behaviour and he needs the systematic theories and descriptions of the linguist to further his research into this field now called psycholinguistics. Similarly a sociologist is interested in language as a social phenomenon and he too needs linguistics for his work in sociolinguistics. We may reverse the picture by saying that certain linguists, following the general principle that every aspect of language is of interest to the linguist, specialize in psychological or social or other aspects where they need the insights provided by the sister disciplines. It is immediately apparent that psychology and sociology are in no way subordinate to linguistics and even the interdisciplines created at their interface with linguistics may be treated to some extent as independent areas of study. The same may be said of all the other second-order applications and those sister disciplines, like language-teaching, which they relate to linguistics.

3.1. Language teaching is less easy to describe in simple terms. It can be both a study in the academic sense and an activity undertaken in the unordered changing context of everyday life. It is not a science in any strict sense although the study of language teaching may have its scientific aspects. In spite of the fact that it must be viewed principally as an activity, however, language teachers nowadays are confronted with a body of theoretical academic knowledge designed to aid them in some way when they come to actually teach in the classroom. This knowledge is often presented during teacher-training or at conferences and courses designed to acquaint them with current trends. We can therefore speak of language teaching in an academic sense and here the term "language pedagogy" is used to cover this meaning and distinguish it from language teaching in the practical sense. Language pedagogy concerns

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[3] We of course include phonetic studies c.f. Halliday et al. 1964.

itself with the total language teaching situation some parts of which may be dealt with in a scientific or quasi-scientific way and other parts of which are more humanistic and view teaching as an art as well as an application of some theory. Language pedagogy is not a science [4] but a conglomerate of knowledge typical of the content of a teacher training course for language teachers. Much has to do with language but there are elements common to all areas of pedagogy like general educational theory, administrative principles and general cultural aspects of the teaching situation. Language pedagogy is more a cover title for the academic study of language teaching than a unified well defined discipline like linguistics.

4.1. A large and important part of language pedagogy will concern itself with language and the various ways in which language is studied. However it would be a mistake to imagine that the complex first-order descriptions of language, contrastive or otherwise, are suitable for language teaching. Such descriptions must be processed for pedagogical consumption. This extremely important operation will involve a process of selection, modification and rejection of items according to the demands of language teaching. Such processes must be based on clear principles derived from psychological, social and other considerations and it is clear that this must all be undertaken within a defined field of interest which will here be termed "pedagogical linguistics" [5] and which has often be called applied linguistics despite the ambiguities of that term. Pedagogical linguistics may be viewed as a second-order application of linguistics and a subject in its own right with theoretical principles and an output of practical material for eventual use in, or adaptation to, particular teaching situations. It will use material not only from linguistics proper but also from other applications of linguistics. Pedagogical linguistics deserves to be seen as a separate and important field with its own principles and not vaguely by some term such as "methodology" or applied linguistics.

4.2. The most important contribution of pedagogical linguistics is pedagogical grammar i.e. language descriptions geared to the demands of teaching. Whereas a linguist attempts to look at all areas of grammar with the same objective eye, the pedagogical linguist will shape his grammars according to the priorities of a given teaching situation or set of teaching situations. Again, his selective principles will not only operate within one particular language

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[4] Although the trend is to bring every facet of the classroom situation into the domain of controlled scientific analysis it must be recognised that there will always be some less easily defined aspects of teaching and learning which may yet be seriously discussed and brought to the attention of all teachers be they theoreticians or practicians of what is still called an "art". This clarification was prompted by a discussion with Dr. W. Marton.

[5] This term was coined by T. P. Krzeszowski and discussed in the introduction of Krzeszowski 1970.

description offered by linguistics. It will also operate over the whole range of linguistic theories. Whereas for the linguist it is usually a matter of working within one theory rather than another, for the pedagogical linguist it may well be a matter of selecting from different grammars reflecting different theories since two separate theories may offer equally useful insights into the language, useful, that is, from a teaching point of view. At first sight it may seem that a pedagogical linguist has greater freedom than a linguist proper but it must be remembered a pedagogical grammar will be judged from at least two points of view i.e. according to its representation of the language or languages under consideration and also according to its suitability to the particular pedagogical demands which it claims to serve. This makes the pedagogical linguist's task if anything more difficult and this fact should be duly recognised.

4.3. A special type of pedagogical grammar is likely to be of particular value (though this is still disputed) and that is contrastive pedagogical grammar. This is chiefly a processing of the contributions of contrastive linguistics for teaching purposes. It was claimed earlier that a (theoretical) contrastive description would successfully predict all the learner's errors for it was naively thought that these arose simply out of differences between the native and target language. This view was proved wrong by an analysis of actual errors and by the observations that contrastive descriptions took no account of the psychological processes involved in language learning. Under the system presented in this paper theoretical contrastive descriptions are undertaken within the field of linguistics with the aim of furthering linguistic knowledge including such questions as the establishing of language universals. A pedagogical contrastive grammar undertaken within a different area of study i.e., pedagogical linguistics seeks to discover contrastive insights that are useful in some way for language teachers. With the newly awakened interest in cognitive psychology and the re-emergence (or persistance) of such teaching techniques as translation and the overt presentation of language differences, it would seem that contrastive pedagogical grammar will be of real value. It may also be linked up with error analysis and attempts at a psychological model of language learning.

4.4. Pedagogical grammar and consequently contrastive pedagogical grammar will use insights from other second-order applications of linguistics, especially from psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics and their various offshoots. Just as it will take into account the psychological processes of learning a second language, it will also take into account the way language is used in society and decisions will have to be made as to what varieties and modes of a given language are to be described and taught. A quick survey of present day intensive courses and textbooks reveals that a sound theoretical basis which a contrastive pedagogical grammar might provide is frequently lacking.

5.1. Having established the links between linguistics and language teaching

and defined some of the interrelating areas we may now specify what a contrastive studies project can seek to achieve within the two perspectives. From a theoretical point of view it can contribute to contrastive linguistics, that is, to the testing of specific linguistic theories, to our detailed knowledge of the contrasted languages and to the establishment of certain language universals. From a practical point of view it can lead to the production of teaching materials and teaching methods. But in order to do the latter the theoretical contrastive analyses must be processed by pedagogical linguists according to the demands of specified teaching situations and decisions must be taken about what areas of the language are relevant. On a more fundamental level decisions must be taken about a given contrastive studies project as to what extent it will function with respect to the theoretical linguistic and the language teaching perspectives. As has been shown, these perspectives involve very different approaches but with a framework such as the one outlined above the two fields of interest may be coordinated.

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