

WS 2003/04

Contrastive Grammar

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more in:

- n Hellinger, M. (1977). *Kontrastive Grammatik Deutsch/Englisch*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- n James, C. (1980). *Contrastive analysis*. London: Longman.
- n Hawkins, John (1986). *A Comparative Typology of English and German. Unifying the Contrasts*. London: Croom Helm.

more on:

<http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/chairs/linguist/independent/kursmaterialien/congram/index.html>

• Introduction to contrastive linguistics

1.1. Historical development

- n 1950's: based on structuralism
- n To make foreign language teaching more effective
- n Based on the assumptions that:
 - n Foreign language learning is based on the mother tongue
 - n Positive transfer: similarities facilitate learning
 - n Negative transfer/Interference: differences cause problems
 - n Via contrastive analysis: problems can be predicted and considered in the curriculum

- n CL seen as an applied branch of linguistics
- n Serving practical purposes in foreign and second language teaching
- n Expectations were not met
- n Interest in CL declined (especially in the US)
- n In Europe, interest continued; large contrastive projects in the 1970s
- n since 1990s corpus-based
- n Expanding field; theoretical and methodological interest
- n Internationalisation increasingly demands cross-cultural competence, translation, foreign language teaching etc.



1.2. Methodological steps in CL

- n 1. Description:
 - n Selection of items to be compared
 - n Characterisation of items in terms of some language independent theoretical model
- n 2. Juxtaposition
 - n Search for and identification of cross-linguistic equivalents
- n 3. Comparison:
 - n Specification of degree and type of correspondence between compared items

1.3. Problems

- n *Tertium Comparationis*:
 - n Lg a and Lg b differ in structure
 - n translation equivalence:
 - n meaning' of structure a > structure b
 - n meaning structure a = meaning structure b?
 - n *Das gefällt mir*
 - n *I like this*
 - n *Cela me plaît / J'aime cela*
 - n *ø gefallen = to like = plaire = aimer...?*
 - n *ø Similar: Present Perfect vs. Perfekt vs. passé composé*
- n norm, standard ?
- n language independent model?

- n *Predictability*
 - n L1-based errors vs. non-L1-based errors
- n *Complexity of language systems*
 - n Analysis of subsystems
- n *Differences vs. similarities*
 - n Importance of crosslinguistics similarities
- n *Langue vs. parole*
 - n Static view on language
 - n Context
 - n Levels of linguistic description in theory and practice

1.4. Levels of description

- n Phonology
- n Morpho-Syntax / Grammar
- n Lexis

- n Pragmatics
- n Text/Discourse
- n ‚Culture‘

1.5. Terminology

- n Contrastive Analysis
- n Transfer: positive and negative
- n Interference
- n Hypercorrection
- n Error Analysis <> predicting errors

2. Tense

2.0. Issues

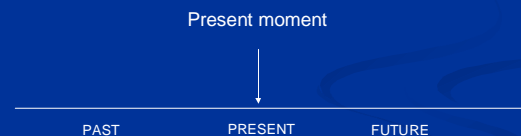
conglomerate tense & aspect & aktionsart:

- n Difficult categories
- n Terminological and conceptual confusion
- n *Joan was singing vs. John is singing:*
TENSE
 - n *Joan was singing vs. John sang:* **ASPECT**

2.0.1. Time concepts and language

- n Conceptualisation of time
 - n Culture-specific
 - n Time arrow / straight time line vs. cycle
 - n Impact on or relevance for grammatical categories?
- n All human languages have ways of locating in time

Representation of time



Representations of situations

- Situations: Processes
Events
States
- Location of situations in relation to some other point or segment of line
 - Internal temporal contour of a situation: point on the line vs. stretch of the time line



Cf. Comrie 1985: 6

2.0.2. Expressions of time

- n Expressions can be divided into three classes:
 - n Lexically composite expressions
 - n Largest set, potentially infinite
 - n *Last year, five minutes after J. left...*
 - n Lexical items
 - n Finite set
 - n *Now, today, yesterday, ...*
 - n Grammatical categories: TENSES
 - n Finite set
 - n *Present, past, ...*

2.0.3. Grammaticalisation vs. lexicalisation

- n Grammaticalisation:
 - n Integration into the grammatical system of a language
 - n Obligatory expression
 - n Morphological boundness
 - n *Joan runs vs. Joan ran*
- n Lexicalisation:
 - n Integration into the lexicon of a language without effect on the grammatical structure
 - n Non-obligatory
 - n Free lexical items
 - n *Now, yesterday...*
- n Borderline cases, „continuum“:
 - n Auxiliaries, preverbal markers...
 - n Diachronic developments

2.1. Approaches to tense

2.1.1. Definitions

- n „Tense relates the time of the situation referred to to some other time, usually the moment of speaking.“ (Comrie)
- n Grammaticalised location in time
- n Commonest tenses cross-linguistically:
 - n Present: situation described is located temporally as simultaneous with the moment of speaking
 - n Past: situation described is located prior to the moment of speaking
 - n Future: situation described is located subsequent to the moment of speaking

- n Tense is almost always indicated on the verb
 - n Verb morphology
 - n Grammatical words (e.g. auxiliaries) adjacent to the verb
- n Tense is a deictic system
 - n Deictic centre (usually present moment of speaking but cf. below for relative tenses)

2.1.2. Absolute tenses vs. relative tenses

- n Absolute tenses relate the time of the situation described to the present moment, i.e. present moment = deictic centre
 - n E.g.: Finite verb forms in English
- n Relative tenses relate the time of a situation to the time of some other situation
 - n E.g.: Non-finite verb forms in English
 - n *When walking down the road, ...*
 - n *... I often meet Harry*
 - n *... I often met Harry*

2.2. Present tense

- n Absolute tense
- n Basic meaning: location of a situation at the present moment (cf. diagram)
- n 100% simultaneity rare
 - n Performative sentences:
 - n *I promise you...*
 - n *I name this ship*
 - n Simultaneous reports
- n Usually: Present tense used to refer to situations which occupy a much longer period of time than the present moment, but which include the present moment
 - n *The Eiffel Tower stands in Paris*
 - n *The author is working on chapter two*
- n Implicature: whether a situation is part of a larger situation extending to the past or future is an implicature that is worked out on the basis of the context, structure of the sentence and/or one's knowledge of the world

- n Many languages use the present tense to refer to habitual situations
 - n *Joan goes to work at eight o'clock (every day)*
 - n *Johanna steht (jeden Tag) um sieben Uhr auf.*
- n Contradiction to definition of basic meaning?
 - n Reference to a habit and not to a sequence of situations
 - n The habit does hold at the present moment
 - n Habituality also aspectual (see below)
- n Present tense = universal tense?
 - n *Cows eat grass*
 - n Interpretation of universal truth on the basis of factors beyond the basic meaning of present tense => implicature

2.3. Past tense

- n Absolute tense
- n Basic meaning: location of a situation in time prior to the present moment
 - n Situation may occupy
 - n a single point
 - n *At seven o'clock yesterday J. promised to give me ten pounds*
 - n an extended time period prior to the present moment
 - n *J. lived in Manchester from 1962 to 1982*
 - n or the whole period up to the present moment
 - n *Up to this moment this disease was incurable*
- n Basic meaning does not include any reference to whether the situation continues to the present or even into the future!
- n Conversational implicature that past tense does not continue to or beyond the present

2.4. Future tense

- n Absolute tense
- n Basic meaning: location of a situation at a time subsequent to the present moment
- n Tense or mood?
 - n Mood: a grammatical category which expresses the degree or kind of reality as perceived by the speaker
 - n Speculative
 - n Prediction
 - n Realis vs. irrealis
- n Many languages have a clear grammatical distinction between past and non-past (i.e. present and future time reference)
- n Distinction between future and non-future is less distinct; in particular between future and present

- n In many languages, present tense the normal verb form used to indicate future (German, Finnish):

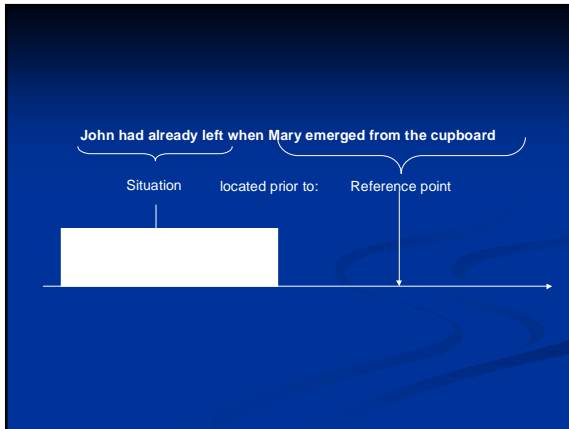
- n German:
 - n *ich gehe morgen ... vs. ich werde morgen gehen*
- n Also possible in English for scheduled situations:
 - n *The train leaves tomorrow*
 - n **It rains tomorrow*

- n Binary tense systems

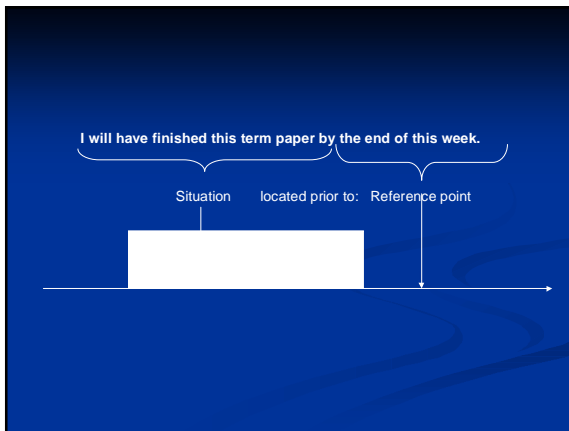
- n Future vs. non-future
- n Past vs. non-past
 - n Present tense can always be used with future time reference (Finnish, German)
 - n Severe constraints on the use of present tense to refer to time (English)

2.5. Absolute-relative tense

- n Some verb forms can combine absolute time location of a reference point with relative time location of a situation
- n As with pure relative tense, the reference point is given by the context
- n Example: **English Pluperfect**
- n Meaning: there is a reference point in the past (before the present moment) and the situation referred to is located prior to that reference point; establishment of the reference point is done by the context



- n Interpretation as 'remote past' is an implicature
 - n Temporal location does not have to be remote
 - n *This particle had been created 2 seconds before this other particle was created 1 second ago.*
 - n Intervening reference point is always necessary
 - n * *They had built the Great Wall of China.*
- n Similar: **Future perfect**
 - n Reference point is in the future (anterior to present moment)



2.6. Perfect

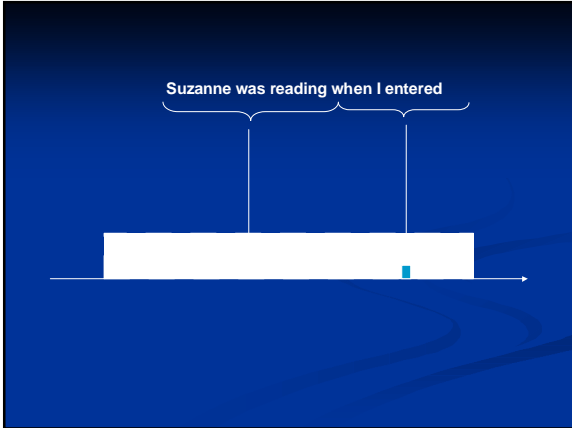
- n Formal similarities between perfect and absolute-relative tenses
- n Location in time prior to a reference point which in this case is simultaneous with the present moment
- n Thus: locates a situation prior to the present moment = past tense
- n Perfect differs from past but not with regard to time location
- n Perfect in English cannot collocate with time adverbials which refer to a specific point or period in the past (#past and #pluperfect and future perfect)

- n Particularity of the English language indicates that perfect constitutes a category apart from past and from absolute-relative tenses
- n Also: cross-linguistically some languages may have a distinct perfect category while lacking a pluperfect or future perfect
- n Diachronic changes affecting the perfect may have no repercussions on the pluperfect and future perfect
 - n German and French: perfect takes over functions originally covered by past tense but pluperfect and future perfect remain
- n Frequent implicature: more recent time reference

3. Aspect

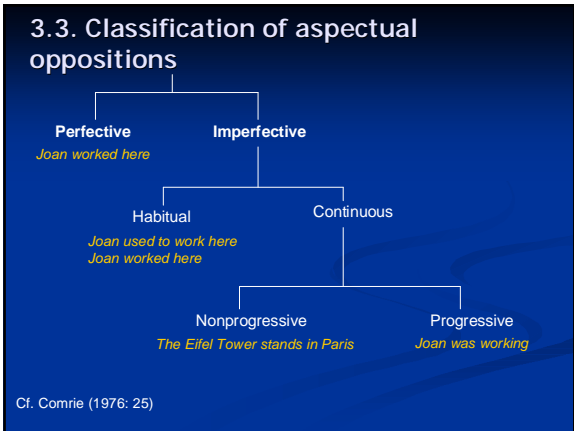
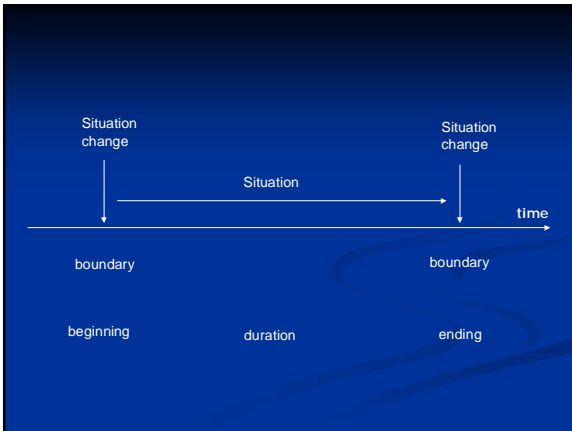
3.1. Approaches

- n „Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation.“ (Comrie 1976:3)
- n Characterisation of the internal structure of an event
 - n *Sue was reading when I entered.*
 - n *Suzanne lisait quant j'entrai.*
- n Background vs. event
- n No reference to the beginning or the end vs. presentation of totality of the situation



3.2. Perfective vs. imperfective

- n Aspect insists on oppositions; for example:
 - n Perfective aspect: looks at the situation from the outside, without distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation
 - n External focus
 - n Imperfective aspect: looks at the situation from the inside, is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation; can look backwards towards the start, or look forward to the end of the situation
 - n Internal focus



3.4. Meaning and form

- n „Aspect’ is often used to refer lexical realisations of this semantic category as well as to grammatical categories corresponding to this semantic distinction
- n Not all aspectual distinctions are expressed or grammaticalised in all languages
 - n Example: English is said to lack the opposition perfective vs. imperfective
 - n Distinction progressive vs. non-progressive realised within a limited set of verbs (i.e. non-stative), and only if habitual meaning is excluded
 - n Example: German basically lacks a grammatical realisation of aspect
 - n *She read the book* > *Sie las das Buch*
 - n *She was reading the book* > *Sie las im Buch*

- n Lexicalisation
 - n German
 - n *gerade, im Buch*
- n Inflection
 - n Spanish
 - n *leyó vs. leía*
- n Periphrasis
 - n English
 - n *she was reading*
- n Very often combination of aspect and tense:
 - n Spanish *leía* combines imperfective meaning with past time reference

3.5. Perfect

- Different type of aspect
- No information about the internal temporal constitution of a situation
- Reference to a past situation which has present relevance
- Indication of continuing present relevance of a past situation

4. Aktionsart

4.1. Approaches

- 1. A distinction of **aspect** which is expressed lexically, rather than grammatically: *eat, nibble, devour*.
- 2. A distinction of aspect which is expressed by derivational morphology (e.g. Russian).
(Trask, *Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*)

a situation may be either static or dynamic, punctual or durative
normally expressed in the lexical meaning of the verb and its arguments

Examples



6.2. Aktionsart categories

- Best known verb categorisation by Zeno Vendler (1967)
- States: *love, hate*
- Activities: *run, walk*
- Accomplishments: *run a mile, read a book*
- Achievements: *win a race, recognize*

▫ Telic vs. atelic

- *Joan is singing vs. Joan is singing a song*
- *Joan sang vs. Joan sung a song.*
- *When I crossed the bridge, a man drowned.*
- *When I crossed the bridge, a man was drowning.*
- *essen vs. aufessen*
- *kämpfen vs. erkämpfen*

▫ Punctual

- *He was coughing*
- also: *flash*
- *reach: *Joan is reaching the summit*