Introduction to contrastive linguistics

1. Historical development

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

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

1.2. Methodological steps in CL

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

1.3. Problems

- Tertium Comparationis:
  - Lg a and Lg b differ in structure
  - translation equivalence: meaning of structure a > structure b
  - meaning structure a = meaning structure b?
    - Das gefällt mir
    - I like this
    - Ça me plait / J’aime coils
    - gefallen = to like = plaire = aimer...?
  - Similar: Present Perfect vs. Perfekt vs. passé composé
  - norm, standard ?
  - language independent model?
1.4. Levels of description

- Phonology
- Morpho-Syntax / Grammar
- Lexis
- Pragmatics
- Text/Discourse
- "Culture"

1.5. Terminology

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

2. Tense

2.0. Issues

conglomerate tense & aspect & aktionsart:
- Difficult categories
- Terminological and conceptual confusion
- Joan was singing vs. John is singing: TENSE
  - Joan was singing vs. John sang: ASPECT

2.0.1. Time concepts and language

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

Representation of time

- Present moment
- Past
- Present
- Future
2.0.2. Expressions of time

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

2.0.3. Grammaticalisation vs. lexicalisation

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

2.1. Approaches to tense

2.1.1. Definitions

"Tense relates the time of the situation referred to to some other time, usually the moment of speaking." (Comrie)

Grammaticalised location in time

Commonest tenses cross-linguistically:
- Present: situation described is located temporally as simultaneous with the moment of speaking
- Past: situation described is located prior to the moment of speaking
- Future: situation described is located subsequent to the moment of speaking

2.1.2. Absolute tenses vs. relative tenses

Absolute tenses relate the time of the situation described to the present moment, i.e. present moment = deictic centre
- E.g.: Finite verb forms in English
- Relative tenses relate the time of a situation to the time of some other situation
- E.g.: Non-finite verb forms in English
  - Was walking down the road, ...
  - ... I often met him
  - ... I often met Harry
2.2. Present tense
- Absolute tense
  - Basic meaning: location of a situation at the present moment (ct. diagram)
  - 100% simultaneously rare
    - Performative sentences:
      - I promise you...
      - I name this ship
    - Simultaneous reports
  - 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
    - The Eiffel Tower stands in Paris
    - The author is working on chapter two
  - 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

2.3. Past tense
- Absolute tense
  - Basic meaning: location of a situation in time prior to the present moment
    - Situation may occupy
      - a single point
      - an extended time period prior to the present moment
      - the whole period up to the present moment
    - Up to this moment this disease was untreatable
  - Basic meaning does not include any reference to whether the situation continues to the present or even into the future!
  - Conversational implicature that past tense does not continue to or beyond the present

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

2.5. Absolute-relative tense
- In many languages, present tense the normal verb form used to indicate future (German, Finnish):
  -German: ich gehe morgen...
  - Also possible in English for scheduled situations:
    - The train leaves tomorrow
- Binary tense systems
  - Future vs. non-future
  - Past vs. non-past
    - Present tense can always be used with future time reference (Finnish, German)
    - Severe constraints on the use of present tense to refer to time (English)
- Some verb forms can combine absolute time location of a reference point with relative time location of a situation
- As with pure relative tense, the reference point is given by the context
- Example: English Pluperfect
  - 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

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

Interpretation as 'remote past' is an implicature:
- Temporal location does not have to be remote.
- "This particle had been created 2 seconds before this other particle was created 1 second ago."
- Intervening reference point is always necessary.

Similar: Future perfect
- Reference point is in the future (anterior to present moment).

2.6. Perfect
- Formal similarities between perfect and absolute-relative tenses.
- Location in time prior to a reference point which in this case is simultaneous with the present moment.
- Thus: locates a situation prior to the present moment = past tense
- Perfect differs from past but not with regard to time location.
- 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).

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

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

- Aspect insists on oppositions; for example:
  - Perfective aspect: looks at the situation from the outside, without distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation
    - External focus
  - 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
    - Internal focus

3.3. Classification of aspectual oppositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>Imperfective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joan worked here</td>
<td>Joan used to work here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprogressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eifel Tower stands in Paris</td>
<td>Joan was working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.4. Meaning and form

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

- Lexicalisation
  - German
    - gerade, im Buch
- Inflection
  - Spanish
    - leyó vs. leía
- Periphrasis
  - English
    - she was reading

- Very often combination of aspect and tense:
  - 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Der Baum erblüht</td>
<td>Der Baum blüht</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ingressive** | **Progressive** | **Egressive**

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.* vs. *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"