

Contrasting English and South Slavic Languages: An Introduction

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The monograph *Contrasting English and South Slavic Languages* contains a collection of contrastive, cross-linguistic studies of South Slavic languages and English.

The history of contrastive approaches to linguistic studies can be traced back to the early 20th century when linguists began systematically comparing different languages. Such studies traditionally compare two or more languages and have a typological focus; they are mainly synchronic and explore both systematic differences and similarities between the languages under observation, where one language is described from the perspective of the other (König 2012).

The contrastive approach thus aims to identify the unique linguistic structures of each language and compare them to those of other languages, providing insights into the nature of language and its use. In the 1970s, contrastive analysis was expected to become both a potential source of a general theory of language and a method of characterizing individual languages (Filipović 1985, 17, quoting Ferguson 1968).

In their more applied form, contrastive studies focus on the development of language teaching methods, translation research, and second language

acquisition. The assumption is that the contrastively observed differences may also represent challenges for both language learners (Granger 2003) and translators. Lado (1957) and Fries (1952), for example, advocate for a systematic approach to the comparison of languages believing that by comparing the linguistic systems of different languages we can identify the areas of difficulty that learners of a non-native language may encounter.

The *Yugoslav Serbo-Croatian-English Contrastive Project* is an example of a typical project that adhered to the above ideas and also included some of the languages analysed in this monograph. Starting at the end of the 1960s, it aimed to describe the points of contrast between Serbo-Croatian and English by focusing “on difficulties of the Serbo-Croatian-speaking learner of English” (Filipović 1985, 10). Although the project mainly explored the differences and similarities between the two languages, the findings of the theoretical studies were to be applicable in the language learning and teaching contexts.

Despite relying on different theoretical frameworks and being based on different assumptions about the nature of language and the relationship between languages, contrastive analysis was criticized as being overly simplistic in its approach to language analysis as well as to language learning and teaching. After its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, contrastive linguistics experienced a decline due to the inability of the field to fully address the complexities of foreign language acquisition and the emergence of other approaches to linguistic analysis (König 2012).

This critique and various advances across a broad range of the sciences led to the development of new theories and approaches to linguistic analysis. A significant innovation that influenced those studies that follow the contrastive tradition was the advent of corpora, and since the 1990s we can observe a “convergence between contrastive linguistics and corpus linguistics”, which shows that “corpus-based approaches are essentially comparative” (Xiao 2013, 267). This is also reflected in their applied aspects, for instance in translation (Baker 1993), pedagogy (Sinclair 2004), lexicology and lexicography (Cowie 1981).

Following other technological advances, contrastive and cross-linguistic studies have helped to shed light on the ways in which different languages interact with one another in the brain or in the mind (see, for instance, Luck and Kappenman 2011; Price 2012; Flecken, Wallbert and Dijkstra 2015). Some of the developments in linguistics have also brought about conceptual innovations – cognitive approaches, for instance, see language as reflecting cognition

(Langacker 2000; Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007) and reject the notion of grammar as a completely autonomous formal system. Moreover, a considerable emphasis in contemporary contrastive and cross-linguistic studies has also been placed on the analysis of language that ventures beyond the sentence by exploring the intricacies of discourse and pragmatics.

The contributions included in this monograph reflect many of the above developments in linguistic research. One of the aims of the volume is to continue the long tradition of contrastive studies by addressing the relationship between English and South Slavic languages, while also considering the plethora of theories, approaches and methodologies available to linguists in the present moment. This task has been enthusiastically pursued by the twelve authors of the eight chapters in this monograph that explore English in contrast to Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, North Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovene.

Alexandra Bagasheva (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria) has conducted a study on the word-formation of psych verbs, specifically the derivational derivation of *Experiencer*. Her approach in the study titled “The Derivational Habitat of *Experiencer* in English and Bulgarian: An Onomasiological Perspective” is described as “contrastive cognitive-onomasiological” and based on the hypothesis that conceptual, linguistic, and metalinguistic factors condition the lack of a dedicated *Experiencer* pattern in English and Bulgarian. Bagasheva’s research shows that the syntactically relevant special properties of psych verbs do not translate into derivational patterns and processes (*Theme* being the exception) and confirms that there are no dedicated affixal patterns or types for exclusively marking *Experiencer* in English or Bulgarian. While discussing the significant differences between the two languages, Bagasheva notes that *-ing* is not used to mark *Experiencer* in English, whereas a corresponding pattern in Bulgarian systematically and exclusively names *Experiencer* (and *Agent*) and is not required to derive any of the other participant roles due to context. The author suggests that the lack of prominence of *Experiencer* marking in word formation is most likely conceptual – the processes in the mind are not accessible to the observer, and thus the mental event is a construal of their own (this is in line with Croft et al. 2018). However, language specific and metalinguistic factors are at play as well: it may be impossible to theorize an abstract schema that encompasses the diversity of mental events involving *Experiencer*, perhaps even due to the lack of adequate tools for linguistic analysis.

Nermina Čordalija (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), **Roe-lien Bastiaanse** (University Medical Center Groningen, the Netherlands), and **Srdan Popov** (University of Groningen, the Netherlands), in their collaborative multi-authored study “What do Event-Related Potentials Reveal about Processing Grammatical Aspect in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian? – A Comparison with English Aspect”, provide a linguistic description of grammatical aspect and an empirical insight into its processing. The authors note that in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS), grammatical aspect is intrinsic to time reference while English grammaticalizes aspect only partly, and simple forms are not marked for aspect. With BCS aspect is encoded synthetically via affixes, while English grammaticalizes aspect periphrastically. In BCS perfective and imperfective verb forms cannot be used in the same context with the same or similar meaning, and imperfective verb forms cannot be used in the real present time frame at all. English, on the other hand, shows a flexible system where different verb forms may express the same or similar aspectual semantics. To address the question of how such morphosyntactic and semantic differences between the two aspectual systems are reflected in processing, Čordalija, Bastiaanse and Popov conduct an event-related potentials (ERP) experiment with the aim of studying the electrophysiological responses to aspectual violations in BCS. The findings are in line with most previous ERP studies on grammatical aspect, suggesting that aspectual violations trigger immediate reanalysis and repair processes reflected in the P600 component. The results are also compared with those from an ERP study on English aspect violations by Flecken, Wallbert and Dijkstra (2015), which showed that violations of aspect in English did not yield a clear electrophysiological response.

Biljana Čubrović (University of Belgrade, Serbia) investigates the strategies employed by L2 learners of English with a Serbian language background in the acquisition of the pairs of English vowels whose qualitative characteristics are markedly different in English, but virtually the same in Serbian. Her study “New Vowel Category Acquisition in L2 Speakers of English: The Case of High Front and High Back Vowels” approaches this goal experimentally – Čubrović uses two groups of English speakers, one with Serbian as their L1 and the other with Mainstream American English as their L1, to compare the vowel pairs FLEECE/KIT and GOOSE/FOOT. She examines the spectral features (F1 and F2 values) in the productions of the observed vowels and checks whether the F1–F2 difference acquired by speakers of Serbian as L1 is in line with the targeted difference for English. Čubrović’s reasoning for the study is contrastive in nature – she compares the two relevant vowel

systems and assumes that a vowel quantity language such as Serbian may influence the quality of vowels in the learners' production of English vowels. She finds that the group which includes advanced speakers of English with Serbian as L1 successfully formed new vowel categories for the KIT and FOOT vowels that do not overlap with the respective FLEECE and GOOSE vowels. However, the formation of new vowel categories varies – at least one L2 speaker seems to rely more on vowel duration, a likely transfer from Serbian. The analysis shows that the English GOOSE/FOOT contrast is not problematic for L1 speakers of Serbian, while the FLEECE and KIT vowels seem to be more challenging and have not yet been fully accommodated into the English vowel inventory. These findings provide new insights into the interaction of vowel quality and quantity across languages (for similar discussions, see Casillas 2015; Escudero and Boersma 2004; Roberto Gonçalves and Silveira 2014; Hirata and Tsukada 2004).

Selma Đuliman (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), in her paper “Translating Humour in *The IT Crowd*: An Analysis in Favour of Introducing Humour Studies into Translation and Interpreting Curricula”, discusses some of the challenges in translating humour from the (British) *The IT Crowd* series into the Bosnian language. The goal was to emphasize the need for introducing humour studies into university curricula. Humour is observed and contrasted between English and Bosnian, and analysed within Minutella's (2014) analytical framework, involving cultural references, wordplay and language variation for humour detection, and Chiaro's (2004) approach to humour translation, which entails substitution, replacement with an idiomatic expression, or replacement with compensatory, verbally expressed humour. A selection of eight scenes from *The IT Crowd* is presented, followed by a discussion of the humour translation challenges in each scene. The transcription and translation of the scenes are provided by the author, since the series has not been translated into Bosnian, since it has not been aired by any of the country's networks. The two main issues emphasized in relation to the process of translating humour are that students of translation studies should be familiar with the basic trends in humour research in linguistic and cultural studies, and that the translation of humorous content can be highly challenging even for more experienced translators, despite the seemingly superficial and familiar plot of the audio-visual material. The results indicate that some humorous content is easy to detect in the source language, but difficult to translate, and there were also instances of translatable content resulting in the loss of humour in the target language. The author claims that humour studies enable

easier understanding and translation for students, while contrastive analysis serves as a pedagogical means of bringing humorous content in translation studies classes into focus.

Frančiška Lipovšek (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) tackles the role of verbs and adverbs in structuring fictive motion. In her study titled “The Role of Verbs and Adverbs in Structuring Fictive Motion in English and Slovene” a motion verb in a fictive motion sentence is defined as not expressing actual motion but likely referring to some physical property of the subject entity by virtue of its meaning, while an adverb of manner utilized in a fictive motion sentence is described as not being able to express the manner of motion but necessarily referring to some correlated property of the subject entity. Taking this as a starting point, the chapter authored by Lipovšek examines the role of vertical and irregular motion verbs and manner adverbials in English and Slovene fictive motion expressions. The study is corpus-based (the studied sentences are extracted from the British Web, ukWaC, and the Slovenian Reference Corpus, Gigafida 2.0) and the results compare Slovene data with data from English, but also in relation to other languages (Matsumoto 1996; Rojo Valenzuela 2003, 2010; Tomczak and Ewert 2015). The new observations about the English-Slovene language pair are as follows: they differ in the mapping potential of verbs – Slovene verbs display less specific meanings than English ones – while the correlations between the manner-related meanings of adverbs and the properties of stationary entities are equally represented in both languages. The author notes that the identified differences are due to the lexicon (many English verbs have not distinct counterparts in Slovene) or some other differences between the two language systems, and do not depend on fictive motion.

Liljana Mitkovska (AUE-FON University, North Macedonia) and **Eleni Bužarovska** (Ss Cyril and Methodius University, North Macedonia) authored the study “Negated Biased Questions in English and Their Equivalents in Macedonian”, in which they present the analysis of English biased questions with negation and their Macedonian equivalents. English negated questions have different readings depending on their discourse goals – the “outer” and “inner”. The two readings are disambiguated by several Macedonian translational equivalents: negated questions with the negation particle *ne* “not”, and questions introduced with the interrogative particles *neli*, and *zar/em*. *Neli*-questions assert the truth of the propositional content, while *zar*-questions challenge the truth of *p*. The authors examine the uses of negated questions in the transcript of the American soap opera *All My Children* (2001). The corpus of 300,000 words

consists of short dialogues on various subjects that concern the protagonists of the series, and the sample is compiled from all negated questions found in the text. The familiarity relations reflected in the language use come from speakers' similar social backgrounds, along with kinship and friendship ties. The bulk belong to the high negation type, while low negation questions are underrepresented (with only four examples). The original questions and their translations are stored in a database for the next step of the analysis, in which the translation variants are classified according to the applied translational strategy. The analysis confirms the initial assumption that they tend to pattern with the two readings of these questions: outer and inner negation (as in Romero and Han 2004). *Neli*-questions mainly render outer negation questions, *zar*-questions pair with inner negation questions, while *ne*-questions are rather ambiguous, and their interpretation may depend on prosodic features. The interplay of two pragmatic factors decides the choice of the translational equivalent: the context and the conversational goal of the question.

Jelena Vujić (University of Belgrade, Serbia) and **Tijana Šuković** (University of Belgrade, Serbia), in “Personal-Name Blends as Instances of Morphological Creativity in English and their Equivalents in Serbian: a Constructionist View”, follow Booij’s (2010) framework of Construction Morphology in analysing personal-name blends in English on a corpus compiled from popular American sitcoms, TV dramas and films, and their (possible) translational equivalents in Serbian, offering an insight into the available morphological mechanisms of creating (morpho-)semantically equivalent personal-name portmanteaus in Serbian. The aim of the contribution is to show that despite being instances of morphological creativity, English personal-name blends represent form-meaning correspondences, which proves them to be generated by constructional schemas rather than arbitrary coinages. As playful and humorous expressions that are the outputs of morphological creativity, personal-name blends are highly context-dependent and understood only by a close speech community. By applying a constructionist approach, they show that their meaning does not have to be completely unpredictable and indecipherable. Vujić and Šuković demonstrate that a specific schema and/or sub-schema can be attributed to several blend formations rather than to single instances, which indicates that they are more rule-governed than may initially appear. The findings also indicate that the outputs of blending may be regarded as extracted from schemas because of the lack of a specific model, which is in line with Tuggy’s belief (2006, 102) that analogy-based and schema-based models are not “strict alternatives”, because they may be “simultaneously active” since “the difference between them is one

of degree”. Furthermore, they demonstrate how the identification and formulation of English blend construction schemas, which specify all the vital information regarding the prosodic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of the novel formations, can be highly valuable to translators, helping them to find and create suitable equivalents in TL, and maximizing the preservation of the form-meaning-use correspondence of the original, as well as that (somewhat) modified English schemas might actively operate in Serbian speakers’ mental lexicon for nonce word creation.

Dragana Vuković Vojnović’s (University of Novi Sad, Serbia) contributed the chapter “Adjective + Noun Collocations in Tourism Discourse – A Contrastive Corpus-Based Study of English and Serbian”, which builds on the tradition of contrastive studies like the ones by Ivir (1969) and Đorđević (1989). She has the goal of identifying recurring *adjective + noun collocations* and analysing their main morpho-syntactic, semantic, and communicative features in the context of web-based promotional tourism texts in English and Serbian. With this purpose in mind, Vuković Vojnović compiles two comparable corpora in English and Serbian from the tourism-related (British) English and Serbian websites, and extracts key *adjective + noun collocations* by means of two software tools, TermoStat Web 3.0 and AntConc. Based on their normalized frequencies per 10,000 words, the collocations are first analysed quantitatively. The qualitative analysis, on the other hand, examines the specific use of *adjective + noun collocations* in the context of tourism texts, as well as the similarities and differences of the collocations in the two languages. The results of the study indicate that *adjective + noun collocations* are more frequent in the Serbian corpus, while the English corpus contains more *noun + noun collocations*. Some Serbian collocations can be considered genuine translation equivalents, while others may be somewhat modified. For instance, the same adjective in Serbian may appear in the superlative form or have a more distinctive meaning. These findings have implications for tourism discourse studies, language typology and lexicography, as well as English for the tourism and hospitality industry. Vuković Vojnović also notes that a contrastive approach to the analysis of lexical collocations, especially in the specialized context, deepens knowledge about the morphosyntactic and lexical-semantic characteristics of the compared languages, revealing some universal features, while also identifying their similarities and differences.

The editors wish to express their sincere gratitude to the authors who contributed their research to this monograph, and to the reviewers of both individual chapters and the book as a whole. We would also like to thank the participants

of the similarly titled workshop at the 9th *Biennial International Conference on the Linguistics of Contemporary English* that took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2022. The papers presented at the conference and the discussions that followed were instrumental in inspiring the present volume. Finally, the publication would not have been possible without the support of the publisher, the University of Ljubljana Press, and the funding provided by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.¹

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1 The editors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research core funding No. P6-0218 2023, and funding for the publication of scientific monographs).

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