

Call for Papers

The programme of 'contrastive linguistics' was formulated in the 1960s and 1970s with the primary goal of making foreign language teaching more efficient. Its basic assumptions can roughly be characterized as follows: (i) first language acquisition and foreign language learning differ fundamentally; (ii) similarities between L1 and L2 will cause no difficulties ('positive transfer'), but differences will, due to 'negative transfer' (or 'interference'); and (iii) on the basis of a systematic comparison of languages it will be possible to make foreign language teaching more efficient. Even though these assumptions are intuitively plausible, the 'contrastive programme' met with several problems and was seriously criticized before long for being too undifferentiated and simple in most of its hypotheses. Moreover, the goal of producing comprehensive and detailed comparisons for pairs of languages was never convincingly realized. It was therefore not surprising that after a period of eager activity, the expectations initially invested into contrastive linguistics were greatly disappointed and many of its adherents abandoned it in favour of empirical studies of learners' behaviour. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, a new, more theoretically oriented direction of contrastive research developed, basically instigated by John Hawkins' monograph *A Comparative Typology of English and German: Unifying the Contrasts* (CUP, 1986). Hawkins regards contrastive analysis as the complement of a typological study: instead of comparing a large number of languages with respect to a single variant property, only two languages are compared with respect to a wide variety of properties. This separation from strictly application-oriented research has made contrastive studies more attractive for a wider circle of linguists, and new methods and the availability of large data collections (esp. corpora) have provided a more solid empirical basis. At the same time, specific branches of applied linguistics have re-discovered contrastive analysis as well, for instance (computer-aided) translation studies and psycho- and neuro-linguistics (e.g. research on bilingualism). This workshop aims to bring together linguists carrying out contrastive research in order to discuss the status quo, recent trends and possible future developments in contrastive linguistics. The focus will be on non-applied aspects of contrastive studies, but will also include specific areas of application (e.g. translation, bilingualism).

Speakers are invited to address questions like the following:

- What kind of insights can be expected from a contrastive study (e.g. correlations between grammatical subsystems, observations inaccessible to descriptions of a single language)?
- What (empirical, methodological) requirements should be met by a contrastive analysis (e.g. general rather than specific observations, embedding in a typological background)?
- What progress has been made through the use of new (statistical, computer-aided, etc.) methods in contrastive studies (e.g. more solid empirical basis, quantitative results)?

- What kind of linguistic framework should be used in contrastive analysis (e.g. basically descriptive framework, avoidance of theory-specific jargon, avoidance of idiosyncrasies in national traditions of grammar writing)?
- What determines the choice of languages compared (e.g. investigation of major languages; potential for further applications such as translation studies, language pedagogy)?