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## Editorial Functional and corpus perspectives in contrastive discourse analysis

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This special issue of *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* offers a collection of original contributions to the study of languages in contrast from discourse, corpus, and functional perspectives. The papers were presented at the Sixth International Conference on Contrastive Linguistics, held in Berlin 29 September–3 October 2010, in the context of two panels: ‘Discourse analysis and contrastive linguistics’ (organized by Maite Taboada, Simon Fraser University and María de los Angeles Gómez-González, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), and ‘Contrastive linguistics, corpus analysis and annotation’ (organized by Julia Lavid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and Erich Steiner, Universität des Saarlandes).

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Much of the ‘new wave’ of contrastive linguistics has focused on aspects of the grammatical system, examining phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic similarities and differences across two or more languages. As with many other areas of linguistics, there exists a renewed interest in discourse perspectives in the study of languages in contrast, and much of that work uses corpora and corpus linguistics techniques to study language.

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By ‘new wave’ of contrastive linguistics, we mean a renewed interest in the contrast and comparison of languages. The framework of the International Conferences in Contrastive Linguistics, initiated at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela in the late 1990s, has provided a venue for the dissemination of such work. A number of volumes out of those conferences

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1 (Butler *et al.*, 2005; Gómez-González *et al.*, 2008b, 2008c; González Álvarez  
 2 and Rollings, 2004; Iglesias Rábade and Doval-Suárez, 2002) have summa-  
 3 rized the innovative research being carried out in contrastive linguistics. As  
 4 Gómez-González and Doval Suárez (2005) point out, contrastive linguis-  
 5 tics is taking shape as its own discipline, distinct from the ‘old style’ of con-  
 6 trastive analysis, which focused on contrastive comparisons for the purpose  
 7 of teaching languages, or took a diachronic view (see Gómez-González and  
 8 Doval-Suárez, 2005 for an overview of the old style and the ‘revival’ of con-  
 9 trastive linguistics). It is also different from typological studies, which tend  
 10 to involve more than two languages, and center on language structures at  
 11 levels below the sentence.

12 We see the interaction of discourse analysis and contrastive linguistics as  
 13 a two-way channel. On the one hand, the contrastive linguistics methodol-  
 14 ogy can serve as a helpful method in the analysis of discourse, highlighting  
 15 the ways in which discourse organization, as a functional constraint, may be  
 16 similar across languages, and pinpointing what linguistic constraints lead to  
 17 different discourse structures. On the other hand, discourse analysis has long  
 18 studied the way in which language in general is organized, and contrastive  
 19 analyses can bring more richness to that kind of analysis.

20 In the rest of this introductory article, we outline how contrastive linguis-  
 21 tics has grown out of earlier approaches that had a focus on second language  
 22 teaching, and describe how discourse and corpus perspectives have contrib-  
 23 uted to the contrastive study of languages. Much of the ground covered here  
 24 has already been explored in introductions to other compilations, and in the  
 25 volumes themselves (Iglesias Rábade *et al.*, 1999; Iglesias Rábade and Doval  
 26 Suárez, 2002; Butler *et al.*, 2005; Gómez-González and Doval-Suárez, 2005;  
 27 Gómez-González *et al.*, 2008a, 2008c). Johansson (2007) also offers a good  
 28 summary of the history of contrastive analysis.

## 30 1. The new wave of contrastive linguistics

31 Broadly defined, contrastive linguistics is the study of one or more lan-  
 32 guages, for applied or theoretical purposes (Johansson, 2000). We men-  
 33 tioned above that we see a new wave of contrastive linguistics, distinct from  
 34 earlier approaches known under the umbrella terms ‘contrastive linguistics’  
 35 or ‘contrastive analysis’, where the focus was the teaching of languages. The  
 36 discipline was probably started by Lado (1957), and a number of studies  
 37 tried to predict difficulties that native speakers of language X would have  
 38 in learning language Y by examining the differences between the two lan-  
 39 guages (Wardough, 1970; di Pietro, 1971; Eckman, 1977). The concepts of  
 40 *interference* (or negative transfer), where structures from one language have  
 41 a negative impact on the learning of a second language, and (positive) *trans-*  
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1 *fer*, where the structures of the two languages match and can therefore be  
 2 transferred from the native into the target language (Ellis, 1994), were central  
 3 to this view of contrastive and applied linguistics, and related work on  
 4 error analysis (Corder, 1981).

5 These fundamental concepts were what eventually led to the partial rejection  
 6 of contrastive analysis, because they were found to be too strong and  
 7 narrow. Ultimately, the behavioural roots of the approach were rejected in  
 8 favour of theories of second language acquisition that took into account pragmatic  
 9 and contextual phenomena, such as the learner's motivation or the context  
 10 in which the learning takes place (Long and Sato, 1984; Sajavaara, 1996).  
 11 More recently the concept of interlanguage has been modified to include some  
 12 of those aspects (Selinker, 1992), and more higher-level discourse aspects have  
 13 been addressed by contrastive rhetoric (Connor, 2002).

14 Another area where contrastive linguistics had an influence was in translation  
 15 (Beekman and Callow, 1974; Enkvist, 1978). The goal was to help translators  
 16 identify the differences between languages, with the goal of achieving  
 17 better translations.

18 The new wave that we refer to constitutes a broadening and reinterpretation  
 19 of the term *contrastive linguistics* to refer to any study, from different theoretical  
 20 perspectives, that takes as point of departure the comparison of two  
 21 (typically, although more are possible) languages. Pioneers in this area are the  
 22 studies of Hawkins on English and German (Hawkins, 1986), or the cross-cultural  
 23 pragmatics of Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989). These new studies often make  
 24 use of corpora in their comparisons, and, although they tend to be applied to  
 25 second language teaching and learning, they do attempt to draw more general  
 26 conclusions (König and Gast, 2009).

## 28 **2. Contrastive discourse studies**

29 Gast (forthcoming) points out that the fact that most recent papers (e.g., those  
 30 published in the journal *Languages in Contrast*) have a discourse orientation  
 31 may be related to the fact that they use corpora, so we will see many connections  
 32 between the work mentioned in this section, which is mostly in the area  
 33 of discourse analysis, and the work in the next section, devoted to corpus-based  
 34 work.

35 It would be impossible to survey all the existing work on discourse with  
 36 a contrastive focus. We will simply mention that many of the functional  
 37 approaches to discourse take a contrastive perspective, from studies on Theme  
 38 and information structure across languages (Hatcher, 1956; Steiner and  
 39 Ramm, 1995; McCabe-Hidalgo, 1999; Caffarel, 2000; Lavid, 2000) and rhetorical  
 40 structure (Rösner, 1993; Delin *et al.*, 1994; Grote *et al.*, 1997; Salkie  
 41 and Oates, 1999; Ramsay, 2001) to characterizations of different aspects of  
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1 genres across languages and cultures (Mitchell, 1957; Koike and Biron, 1996;  
2 Luzón Marco, 2002; Taboada, 2004).

3 Within the studies on contrastive discourse it is worth mentioning the  
4 work of the Multilingualism group based at the University of Hamburg, some  
5 of which has an emphasis on translation. Many of their publications deal with  
6 contrastive issues in discourse, in particular two of the volumes in the Ham-  
7 burg Studies in Multilingualism published by John Benjamins<sup>1</sup> one on con-  
8 nectivity (Rehbein *et al.*, 2007) and one on multilingual discourse production  
9 (Kranich *et al.*, 2011).

### 11 3. Corpus-based contrastive studies

12 Johansson (2007) makes a compelling case for the use of corpora in contras-  
13 tive studies, attributing, in part, the resurgence of contrastive work to the  
14 availability of corpora. It is certainly the case that corpora, whether small-,  
15 medium- or large-scale, have given us new insights into the comparison of  
16 languages. Multilingual corpora are useful because they provide information  
17 about all aspects of the language, from morphological to discourse-level com-  
18 parisons. The composition of the corpora may also shed light on differences  
19 across genres and cultures, translated versus original texts, and those written  
20 by native and non-native speakers.

21 In terms of the origin of the corpus texts, there is a clear two way distinc-  
22 tion between translation and comparable corpora (Johansson, 2007), also  
23 referred to as parallel and comparable. The former are translated versions of  
24 the same texts, sometimes aligned (parallel) at the sentence level, whereas the  
25 latter are original texts in each language, collected to be comparable in terms  
26 of genre and register (in the sense of Halliday, 1989), that is, in terms of type  
27 of text, subject matter, formality and mode of delivery.

28 Modern corpus-based approaches have proven most fruitful in the original  
29 pursuit of contrastive analysis, that of second language learning. In particular  
30 the work of Granger and colleagues has resulted in a number of corpora, and  
31 studies on contrastive corpora with the goal of helping the second language  
32 learner and teacher (Granger, 1998a; Granger *et al.*, 2002, 2003, 2009). Most  
33 Computer Learner Corpora (CLC) research adopts the methodology of *Con-*  
34 *trastive Interlanguage Analysis*, which may involve two types of comparison:  
35 a comparison of native language and learner language (L1 vs. L2) and a com-  
36 parison of different varieties of interlanguage (L2 vs. L2). The result is a view of  
37 learner language in terms of the words, phrases, grammatical items or syntac-  
38 tic structures that are either over- or underused by learners and therefore con-  
39 tribute to the foreign-sounding characteristics of advanced interlanguage even  
40 in the absence of errors. The topics dealt with range from modals (Aijmer,  
41 2002; McEnery and Kifle, 2002), high frequency vocabulary (Ringbom, 1998,  
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1 1999; Altenberg, 2002), connectors (Milton and Tsang, 1993; Granger and  
 2 Petch-Tyson, 1996; Altenberg and Tapper, 1998) collocations and prefabs  
 3 (Howarth, 1996; Granger, 1998b; De Cock, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003) to infor-  
 4 mation structure (Boström Aronsson, 2001; Callies, 2009). This approach has  
 5 been criticized for presenting interlanguage as an incomplete version of the  
 6 target language. Granger (2004: 133) justifies the approach arguing that ‘most  
 7 CLC research so far has involved advanced EFL learners (...). For this cate-  
 8 gory of learners more than any other, it makes sense to try and identify the  
 9 areas in which learners still differ from native speakers and which therefore  
 10 necessitate further teaching.’

#### 11 4. The papers in this collection

12 The papers included here have been organized around four themes: stud-  
 13 ies of discourse markers; information structure; registers and genres; and  
 14 phraseology.  
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16 The first theme, discourse markers, includes four papers that examine the  
 17 differences in the use of discourse markers across languages. Recent research  
 18 has shown the fruitful perspective that contrastive studies can bring to the  
 19 study of discourse markers and their use in signalling coherence relations  
 20 (Knott and Sanders, 1998; Altenberg, 2002; Degand and Pander Maat, 2003;  
 21 Taboada, 2004; Fabricius-Hansen, 2005; Degand, 2009, among others). These  
 22 contrastive studies add to a large existing body of research that has focused  
 23 primarily on English, some of it with a historical perspective (Brinton, 1996).  
 24 Much territory remains to be covered in contrastive studies of discourse  
 25 markers, from a discourse point of view, or from the point of view of trans-  
 26 lation studies, into how discourse markers are translated, added or omitted  
 27 across languages, and what their role is in the interpretation of coherence  
 28 relations.

29 The first paper in this group, by Taboada and Gómez-González, takes as a  
 30 starting point the study of one particular coherence relation, Concession, and  
 31 examines how it is signalled through discourse markers. The paper compares  
 32 English and Spanish, across two different genres, one written and one spoken.  
 33 The authors conclude that the genre (written or spoken) seems to be more  
 34 important in the selection of functions for the concessive relation than the lan-  
 35 guages themselves. That is, the use of concessive relations is very similar across  
 36 languages, but varies more across genres.

37 The paper by Stenström makes use of two rich corpora: the Corpus Oral  
 38 del Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid (COLAm), and the Bergen Corpus of  
 39 London Teenage Language (COLT). Stenström compares the use of the dis-  
 40 course marker *venga*, a very frequent item in informal and teenage talk, with  
 41 functions both at the discourse and interactional level of conversation. She  
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1 shows that, given its multifunctionality in Spanish, it has more than one equiv-  
2 alent in the English corpus.

3 The third paper, by Adam and Dalmas, compares discourse markers in  
4 French and German, first from a general point of view, thus abstracting from  
5 existing studies in either language, and then in the two languages in con-  
6 trast, with focus on three particular markers. Adam and Dalmas propose that  
7 the differences in the use of discourse markers rest with two characteristics  
8 of French that make it different from German. First, in French, the signs of  
9 discourse organization on the part of the speaker tend to be more explicit.  
10 Second, the verbal element in French has a more central global role than it  
11 does in German.

12 The final paper in this section, by Romero-Trillo, examines the use of  
13 Pragmatic Markers as a tool to support interpretation and verify the current  
14 interpretation of the communicative act, in a process labelled 'communica-  
15 tive triangulation'. Romero-Trillo studies the English of native and non-native  
16 speakers, showing that there are subtle intonation differences in the produc-  
17 tion of Pragmatic Markers across those groups. His analyses can contribute to  
18 pedagogical aims and help improve intercultural communication.

19 The volume continues with a section on information structure. Previous  
20 research shows that there is a great deal of variation in the morpho-syntactic  
21 realization of information structure categories (theme, topic, focus, etc.) across  
22 speech and writing (e.g., Hannay, 1994; Gómez-González, 2001, 2004). Con-  
23 trastive investigations (e.g., Gómez-González and González García, 2005;  
24 Hannay and Martínez Caro, 2008a, 2008b) can bring to light systematic differ-  
25 ences between languages in the encoding of such categories, in their frequency  
26 of usage, and with regard to the 'competing motivations' (Du Bois, 1985) that  
27 prioritize one choice over another. Examples of competing motivations may be  
28 the expression of 'alternative linguistic construals' (Goldberg and Del Giudice,  
29 2005), the manifestation of different degrees of (inter)subjectivity (Stein and  
30 Wright, 1995; Scheibman, 2002; Verhagen, 2005), or the implementation of dif-  
31 ferent perspectivizing strategies (Langacker, 1985, 1989, 1990).

32 The first paper in this section, by Hannay and Gómez-González, examines  
33 an understudied aspect of language, the use and function of parentheticals. In  
34 particular, the authors study thematic parentheticals, those occurring between  
35 elements of the Theme, or immediately following the Theme (as defined by  
36 Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Their analysis of an English-Dutch corpus  
37 shows that thematic parentheticals have similar functions in the two lan-  
38 guages, but that both genre-specific and language-specific differences also  
39 exist. The authors suggest that there is an interesting interplay between the  
40 syntactic features that a language allows and the stylistic differences that arise  
41 as a result.

1 Herriman's paper has as a starting point the similarities in presentation  
2 order in English and Swedish. Both languages make use of the principle of  
3 end-weight, and both languages rearrange elements following that principle,  
4 with rearrangements resulting in fronting, extraposition, existential construc-  
5 tions and cleft sentences. However, upon close inspection, she discovers that  
6 Swedish makes much more frequent use of fronting and it-clefts, which she  
7 attributes to language-specific constraints (V2 in Swedish, and SV in English).  
8 As with many of the other papers, her careful study of fine-grained aspects of  
9 discourse has applications for second language teaching.

10 Doval Suárez and González Álvarez also concern themselves with structure  
11 of information, in their case the use of it-clefts in learner corpora. They con-  
12 trast use, frequency and structural complexity of it-clefts in the Spanish por-  
13 tion of the International Corpus of Learner English with the native equivalent  
14 in the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays. They conclude that, contrary  
15 to the findings of previous studies carried out with learners with different L1s,  
16 Spanish learners underuse it-clefts. It is suggested that this underuse may  
17 point to the fact that the learners are overusing other focus constructions  
18 such as pseudoclefts. The paper is an excellent example of a type of contrastive  
19 analysis that examines learner's language, or interlanguage, but unlike older  
20 approaches to interlanguage, does so from a quantitative point of view.

21 The structure of Theme and Rheme, both in English and Spanish, has been  
22 well researched (Gómez-González, 2001; Lavid *et al.*, 2010; Taboada, 2004).  
23 The differences across the two languages are well known, as are the challenges  
24 that more flexible word order and subject ellipsis bring to the application of  
25 an English-based notion (Theme as the first ideational element, Halliday and  
26 Matthiessen, 2004) to the study of Spanish. In the paper by Arús, Lavid and  
27 Moratón, however, new insights are brought to bear, stemming from the anno-  
28 tation of thematic structure in a contrastive corpus of English and Spanish.  
29 Arús and colleagues propose the notion of Pre-Head and Head to account for  
30 the split nature of the verbal element in Spanish (containing both the Partici-  
31 pant and the Process). The paper describes the process of rigorous annotation  
32 of the thematic structure of the clause in a corpus of newspaper discourse,  
33 and puts forward proposals for the large-scale annotation of such a complex  
34 phenomenon.

35 The paper by Hidalgo and Downing is also part of the same project, an  
36 annotation effort at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Hidalgo and  
37 Downing examine the pragmatic notion of topic, and annotate it in a contras-  
38 tive corpus of assorted genres in English and Spanish. They also annotate the  
39 information status of discourse referents (Gundel *et al.*, 1993), with the two-  
40 fold goal of creating an annotated corpus and obtaining insights about topic  
41 organization in the two languages.  
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1 The third set of papers deal with discourse and contrastive issues from the  
2 point of view of genre or register. Although most of the other papers also con-  
3 sider genre as an important variable in contrastive analyses, the papers in this  
4 section take the notion of genre as the point of departure for the analysis. The  
5 uncovering of recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns in different text types  
6 and genres, and across different languages and socio-cultural settings, raises  
7 speakers' awareness of how different discourse roles, discourse strategies and  
8 power statuses are enacted in their linguistic choices. This has been a contin-  
9 uous preoccupation among discourse analysts and grammarians (e.g., Swales,  
10 1990; Biber *et al.*, 1999; Bhatia, 2002), but it clearly is still a hot issue that  
11 deserves further investigation. The papers in this section make an important  
12 contribution to the study of genres from a contrastive point of view.

13 Kunz and Steiner open the section with a study of cohesion in English and  
14 German. They consider cohesion from the point of view of language contact,  
15 and study texts in either language and their translations in the other, analys-  
16 ing the influence that translation has on language change. Cohesion analyses  
17 have a long tradition in English, starting with the seminal work of Halliday  
18 and Hasan (1976), but there exists little work comparing studies of cohesion  
19 in English based in that framework to analyses in other languages. Kunz and  
20 Steiner propose a framework, methodology and corpus annotation process  
21 that will facilitate the systematic comparison of cohesive resources across lan-  
22 guages and genres.

23 In Pounds' paper we find a contrastive analysis of an everyday genre, real  
24 estate advertisements, in English and Italian. Given the culture-specific context  
25 of the genre, Pounds uncovers interesting differences in the way the persuasive  
26 nature of the texts is conveyed in the two languages. She uses the Appraisal  
27 framework (Martin and White, 2005) to study how evaluative language is  
28 expressed in the two sets of corpora. Appraisal and evaluative language are  
29 particularly interesting cross-linguistically because, as pointed out by Hun-  
30 ston and Sinclair (2000: 74), 'evaluation appears parasitic on other resources  
31 and to be somewhat randomly dispersed across a range of structural options  
32 shared with non-evaluative functions'. Evaluation tends to be highly implicit  
33 and discourse-dependent (Hunston, 2000: 199–201), which makes a contras-  
34 tive analysis particularly well-suited to uncovering general properties of eval-  
35 uation across languages. Pounds finds interesting differences between English  
36 and Italian, in particular in the degree of explicitness of the evaluation.

37 Taboada and Carretero also study evaluative language from the perspective  
38 of Appraisal. In their work, a corpus of informally-written reviews of books  
39 and movies is analysed, contrasting English and Spanish texts. The genre is  
40 particularly interesting because it is also persuasive and argumentative, but  
41 informal in this case (the reviews were posted online, on consumer-oriented  
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1 sites). Theirs is part of a large-scale annotation effort, and their paper dis-  
 2 cusses, in particular, how the categories of Appraisal need to be very well  
 3 defined, so that the corpus can be reliably annotated by different coders.

4 Zamorano-Mansilla and Carretero close this section with a paper within  
 5 the same research project, aimed at creating a large annotated corpus of Eng-  
 6 lish and Spanish. Their paper focuses on the annotation of modality in the two  
 7 languages, and in particular the issues of annotator reliability when specifying  
 8 types of modality conveyed by modal verbs and particles. This paper focuses  
 9 on dynamic modality, showing that, although it is comparable in English and  
 10 Spanish from a definition point of view, in practice its annotation leads to the  
 11 most disagreements.

12 The final section of the special issue contains two papers that focus on  
 13 phraseology, as a bridge between lexico-grammar and discourse. Rica Per-  
 14 omingo analyses lexical bundles in two corpora, one of non-native writers  
 15 of English, and another one of professional native writers (containing Eng-  
 16 lish and Spanish subcorpora). The study uncovers interesting results, showing  
 17 that non-native writers resort to multi-word units more frequently than native  
 18 speakers of English, but that they show both over- and under-use of certain  
 19 multi-word units, in particular those present in the native language. Rica Per-  
 20 omingo emphasizes the importance of multi-word units as topics in the teach-  
 21 ing of English as a second language.

22 Mansilla also studies phraseology, but this time with a Spanish-German  
 23 contrast, and focusing on an interesting semantic field, that of lying, falsehood  
 24 and deceit. She approaches the concept of falsehood as a metaphor (Lakoff  
 25 and Johnson, 1980), and explores the different expressions of falsehood in the  
 26 two languages, and the different cognitive models that they reveal.

## 28 5 Conclusion

29 The papers in this special issue, in summary, provide examples of cutting-  
 30 edge research in contrastive analyses of different languages, all of them with  
 31 a discourse and functional perspective. The languages included (Dutch, Eng-  
 32 lish, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish) cover a range of Euro-  
 33 pean languages, showing not only diversity in their grammatical structures,  
 34 but also subtle differences that are the focus of many of the papers. The tech-  
 35 niques used, from concordancing and careful annotation to painstaking qual-  
 36 itative analysis, showcase the variety of approaches to the study of languages  
 37 in contrast.  
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## 40 Note

- 41 1. [http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t\\_seriesview.cgi?series=HSM](http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t_seriesview.cgi?series=HSM)  
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