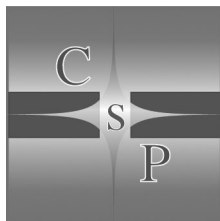


Multilingualism and Applied Comparative Linguistics

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Edited by

Frank Boers, Jeroen Darquennes and Rita
Temmerman



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PREFACE

In February 2006 the first international conference on *Multilingualism and Applied Comparative Linguistics (MACL)* was held in Brussels, Belgium. The present book is the first of two volumes containing a selection from the approximately 120 papers that were presented at that three-day event.

The aim of the *MACL* conference was to bring together scholars from various branches of applied linguistics with a shared interest in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. The conference thus fostered an exchange of knowledge and expertise among researchers from various disciplines, including educational linguistics, cultural linguistics, lexicography, translation studies and studies of domain-specific languages. In the present volume that exchange revolves around issues of language pedagogy. The second volume will feature selected papers on cross-cultural communication, translation studies, and multilingual terminology.

Apart from the first chapter, in which Michal Paradowski presents a concise history of applied comparative linguistics and a rationale for incorporating cross-linguistic comparisons in second and foreign language pedagogy, all the contributions to the present volume are original empirical studies that report the results of controlled experiments and/or corpus-based investigations.

Part I of the book estimates the opportunities for incidental language learning in multilingual settings. In the chapter by Christian Ollivier and Katja Pelsmaekers that setting is the internet. Their study shows that, as long as a communicative event is sufficiently familiar (for example, booking a hotel room) and the required contents predictable, the lack of familiarity with the actual language that is used in that event need not be an impediment to inter-comprehension. This lends credibility to policies (e.g. in Europe) that encourage *plurilingualism*, i.e. the ability of people who do not share the same language(s) to find sufficient common ground to enable them to communicate. Furthermore, the results of Ollivier and Pelsmaekers' experiment indicate that, despite the task-induced focus on communication in the experiment (i.e. comprehending and answering questions in an on-line hotel-booking form), the participants tended to retain a fair number of the target-language words they were confronted with. This incidental uptake suggests that tasks set up to foster plurilingualism can help pave the way towards the more ambitious

objective of *multilingualism* (i.e. mastery of other languages apart from one's mother tongue). Opportunities for inter-language development (i.e. improving one's current mastery of a given target language) are also gauged by Marisol Fernández García and Asunción Martínez Arbeláiz, who examine the study-abroad context. It is well known that in immersion programmes such as the study-abroad context, the native-speaker hosts seldom give explicit language instruction or explicitly correct their guests' language "mistakes". Opportunities for learning typically occur when the learners notice gaps or deficiencies in their knowledge of the target language during interactions with native speakers, for example when they do not (fully) comprehend the native-speakers' input. In the study by Fernández García and Martínez Arbeláiz, eight American exchange students were paired up with Spanish native-speaker students in order for them to get extra-curricular practice in conversational English and Spanish. The recorded Spanish conversations of the pairs were then screened for moments when the exchange students gave evidence of comprehension problems. The analysis reveals considerable variation in the ways such problems are actually signalled (if at all) to the interlocutor and in the ways the latter responds to such a signal. It is understandable that an exchange student may sometimes feel embarrassed about explicitly appealing for help, just as the native-speaker host may feel reluctant to interrupt the flow of conversation by adopting the role of language instructor. However, the study shows that it is when exchange students alert their interlocutors to a comprehension problem in an explicit or unambiguous way, that the native-speaker partners are most likely to provide the linguistic input that is necessary for the learners to push their interlanguage.

The chapters that make up Part II of the volume build bridges between the disciplines of foreign language teaching and interpreter training. Alessandro Zannirato reports two experiments that he set up to measure the potential benefits of incorporating interpreter-training techniques (such as memorisation and translation practice) in a foreign-language course. The results show that classroom procedures inspired by interpreter-training techniques can indeed bring about considerable improvements in learners' proficiency overall, and most significantly so at the level of lexical competence. These findings also give reason to question the ban on translation exercises that has existed in many language-teaching paradigms (e.g. the Direct Method and Communicative Language Teaching) since the demise of the grammar-translation method. In the chapter by June Eyckmans the exchange of expertise is reversed, as in her contribution foreign language teaching research is exported to interpreter training. The

question at the heart of Eyckmans' study is whether the significant correlations that have been found between foreign language learners' knowledge of standardised phrases (i.e. formulaic expressions, strong collocations, etc.) and their fluency in spoken discourse are to be expected also in interpreter-trainees when they translate into a target language. The results suggest that knowledge of phrases can indeed contribute to fluency in the interpreting performance. However, whereas in conversation learners can 'freely' insert phrases they feel confident about and thus enhance the impression of being fluent speakers, a translation task obviously requires careful matching between phrases one has mastered and the actual content of the source text. Consequently, for a learner's repertoire of phrases to really facilitate fluent interpreting into a target language, it needs to contain a very large number of phrases, and these phrases need to be fully mastered so as to be easily retrievable from memory.

The idea of phrase-learning is also taken up by Hélène Stengers in Part III of the book, in which the common ground between languages is charted through corpus-based comparisons. Stengers sets out from the popular claim that English might be an exceptionally idiomatic language. It is this assumption that has fuelled doubts over the scope of application and effectiveness of phrase-learning (also known as a *Lexical Approach*) to languages beyond English. Using Spanish as an example, Stengers shows that there is neither theoretical foundation nor any quantitative evidence to support the claim that languages would differ in their degrees of idiomaticity or 'phraseomaticity'. Hence, there seems to be no reason why a pedagogical approach which has been shown to be effective when applied to English should not be tried out in the teaching of other languages such as Spanish. Spanish is also the target language in the chapter by Lieve Vangehuchten, but her focus is on teaching language-for-specific-purposes (LSP), more specifically economic entrepreneurial discourse. Vangehuchten's corpus-based analysis allows her to estimate what proportion of Spanish entrepreneurial lexis is likely to be transparent to learners of Spanish who are familiar with the domain of business and economics. Although the explicit teaching and intentional learning of specialised vocabulary is still indispensable according to the author, the investigation suggests that, given students' knowledge of universal terms and cognates, they should be capable of figuring out the meaning of a substantial number of technical and sub-technical terms autonomously.

Part IV investigates the role of familiarity with previously acquired languages (including, first and foremost, the mother tongue) in foreign-language learning. In his second contribution to the book, Michal

Paradowski reports the results of a controlled experiment which suggest that foreign-language grammar instruction that forges explicit connections with the grammar of the students' mother tongue aids learning, at least as far as students' application of discrete-point grammar rules is concerned. While Paradowski's approach is grounded in Generative Linguistics, Martha Gibson and Britta Hufeisen use Cognitive Linguistics as the theoretical framework for their contribution. It is now widely acknowledged that frequently used lexical items are typically polysemous, i.e. they have various interrelated senses. Spatial prepositions are a case in point. The relevance for language learning is that, although two languages may seem to share words with an equivalent meaning, the equivalence is seldom complete in the sense that it seldom holds for all of the respective usages of the words, and this may obviously cause problems for the language learner. The learner's appreciation of the principles of polysemy, i.e. how the different senses of a word can be related to each other and to a common core sense, is a kind of language awareness that has been shown to be beneficial for learning. It is quite likely that experienced language learners have had more opportunity than monolingual learners to develop such language awareness and will thus show a heightened appreciation of the principles of polysemy. It is that hypothesis which is put to the test in the psycholinguistic experiment reported by Gibson and Hufeisen.

In the last part of the volume, Part V, the cultural dimension is brought to the fore. Areti-Maria Sougari and Nicos Sifakis report the results of a large-scale survey the aim of which was to find out to what extent teachers in Greek state schools are inclined to present English to their pupils as a globally used language, with diverse varieties and with diverse cultural backgrounds. Despite attempts (albeit modest ones) on the part of course book writers and the education authorities to encourage the teaching of English as a medium for cross-cultural communication, it appears from the survey that many teachers still favour the teaching of *British* English (and RP in particular) and still introduce mostly British cultural elements to their pupils. In the final chapter, Tamara Van Schilt-Mol scrutinizes Dutch primary-school exams for culture-induced test-item bias. She demonstrates how statistics can help detect test-items that work to the advantage (and sometimes disadvantage) of native-speaker pupils in comparison with immigrant children, and she shows how such bias disappears after simple modifications to the problematic test items.

We hope you will enjoy reading this collection of research papers and get a taste of the spirit in which the *MACL* conference was held.

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CHAPTER ONE

COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS
AND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY:
CONCISE HISTORY AND RATIONALE

MICHAL B. PARADOWSKI

Belladonna, n.: In Italian a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison.
A striking example of the essential identity of the two tongues.
—Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (1911) *The Devil's Dictionary*

History in a nutshell

The history of comparative linguistics has had the wheel-of-fortune character (as exhaustively presented in Fisiak 1981, Granger 2003 and Paradowski 2007) and its validity and usefulness for language pedagogy have been the subject of numerous spirited controversies.

Early beginnings

The beginnings of systematic theories of the relationships between human languages and at the same time of contrastive linguistics (CL) are marked by Sir William Jones' famous Anniversary Discourse of Feb. 2 1786 (referenced here as Jones 1788) where he contended that Sanskrit was related to Latin and Greek, and surmised that Germanic and Celtic descended from the same source:

The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.

However, the real surge of interest in the potential usefulness of CL for *language pedagogy* started only in the wake of World War II. Cross-linguistic comparison became a vital source of information for language teaching methodology and was granted huge funds (especially in the US), following the declaration by Charles C. Fries that:

the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (Fries 1945, 9)

In the two decades following World War II, many linguists from the Prague school of linguistics and other scholars across the continent produced numerous theoretical contributions (e.g. Orr 1953; Valtonen 1953; Glinz 1957; Kielski 1957-60; Krušelnickaja 1961; Enkvist 1963; also see Fisiak 1981, 6). Several projects were launched at various centres of active research, with over a thousand papers and monographs written over that period.

The rationale for using insights from Contrastive Analysis (CA) in language pedagogy at that time was based on the notions of “transfer” and “interference” (Jackson 1981, 195). This coincided with behaviourist views of learning (e.g. Skinner 1957) as habit formation through analogy rather than deductive analysis. From this perspective, interference from prior knowledge, i.e. *proactive inhibition*, when old habits get in the way of attempts to form new ones, was taken to constitute the main impediment to learning. Consequently, the degree of difficulty in language learning was believed to reflect the extent to which the target-language patterns differ from the mother tongue. Until the 1970s, the emphasis of applied CA was laid first and foremost on this inhibitive influence of the mother tongue, and more specifically on the way contrastive information can help anticipate foreign language learners’ “errors” when using the target language. As such, CA became strongly associated with error analysis, and there was a tendency to interpret all target-language errors which showed similarity to an L₁ feature as evidence of L₁ interference.

CA on the defensive

In the 1970s, however, CA came under fire because its model for anticipating obstacles to foreign-language learning was considered too simplistic. This coincided with a decline in the popularity of behaviourist views of learning in general.

In response, SLA researchers reapplied CA as a tool for pinpointing *potential* areas of difficulty and relocated the notion of transfer within a cognitive framework. In addition, the emphasis started to shift from inhibitive factors (i.e. the contrasts between the mother tongue and the target language) to factors that could promote and facilitate foreign language learning (i.e. the similarities between both languages (Ellis 1994, 315)). That is also the reason why the editors of the present book have opted to use the term applied *comparative* (rather than *contrastive*) linguistics.

While the proponents of Error Analysis (EA) kept incorporating CA in their methodology, implicitly or explicitly (*cf.* e.g. Schachter 1974; Wode 1978. Sridhar 1980/81, 210, 232), it was stressed that the scope of CA was actually wider than that of EA. For one thing, Sridhar (*op. cit.*, 219) argues that CA can bring to light areas of difficulty that are overlooked by EA (*cf.* the investigations in Duškova 1969a; Banathy and Madarasz 1969; Richards 1971; Schachter 1974; Celce-Murcia 1978; among others). Corder (1971) also pointed out that not all errors are directly observable. For instance, a learner's utterance, though superficially well formed, may have been produced correctly "by chance," by way of a set of rules different from that of the TL owing to holophrastic learning, or with the actual meaning different from the intended one, or through the systematic avoidance of problematic structures (see also Schachter 1974).

Then, if anything, the turbulent controversy in the 1970s only seems to have contributed to a clarification of CA's possibilities and limitations (Sridhar 1980/81, 210). Most of the criticism levelled at CA was in fact already refuted by James (1971). Among the arguments that have been put forward in defence of CA we find the following.

CA *is* useful for error analysis. While it is true that not all of a learner's problems are attributable to direct interference from the mother tongue, every experienced language teacher will confirm that a substantial number of persistent errors and mistakes are due to the learner carrying over L₁ patterns into TL performance, and that the overall patterns of error do tend to be language-specific (Swan and Smith 2001, xi). If certain items are regularly substituted in the TL, then there is a good chance that this is caused by L₁ interference, and what is needed is more CA, not less (Sanders 1976/81, 23-24). Moreover, the very knowledge that a target item is nonexistent in the learners' L₁ is useful in identifying a problem area, even if it can go no further (*ibid.*). The finding that not all CA-based predictions are always borne out does not invalidate the theory. The non-occurrence of a predicted error may simply be indicative of a learner's avoidance of structures that are felt too challenging precisely because of

contrasts with the mother tongue (Corder 1973; Schachter 1974; Celce-Murica 1978). The failure of predictions in particular instances (while they were borne out in scores of other empirical studies, e.g. Duškova 1969b; Schachter 1974) only calls for a refinement of the theory rather than its rejection (Sridhar 1980/81, 219). Besides, as Lee (1968) points out, the critics of the lack of a 100% predictive ability forgot that the aim of CA was only to refer to “behavior that is likely to appear with greater than random frequency” (Lado 1968), never claiming that it accounts for *all* errors.

As long as transfer is one of the variables contributing to success or failure in FLL, CA should have a place in FLT methodology (Stockwell 1968). For example, CA is not incompatible with a view of language learning as a process of hypothesis testing (Corder 1967), if the psychological basis of “interference” shifts from the behaviourist conditioning principle to something more akin to transfer of training, where the mother tongue may be selected as one of the learner’s initial hypotheses (or “processing strategies;” Sridhar 1980/81, 220). In the words of Selinker (1992): “one can believe in language transfer without being a behaviourist. One wonders why this was not always clear”. CA is an extremely useful instrument in materials design, able not only to predict areas of potential error (Jackson 1981, 204), but also to explain and remedy many of those problems that actually crop up. Thus, it is able to provide an inventory of useful data for authors of textbooks and pedagogical grammars on at least some areas (Marton 1972/81, 165). CA can help determine the frequency and stylistic distribution of certain structures in both languages (Levenston 1971), which may inform the selection, grading, and presentation of foreign language input (Nickel and Wagner 1968). Furthermore, CA is particularly helpful when the teacher does not have competence in the mother tongue of the learners (or the experience of having learnt a FL)—the basic knowledge necessary to understand and remedy interference errors (Jackson 1981, 199).

From the late 1980s onwards, interlingual transfer was re-established as a major factor in SLA/FLL, giving comparative linguistics the green light over again (e.g. Odlin 1989; Selinker 1992; James 1998). The focus, obviously, had to depart from the original one, now moving towards reconciling the phenomenon with the cognitive, developmental perspective (Gass and Selinker 1992).

New momentum

In recent years, contrastive linguistic research has gained momentum with

the emergence and rapid development of corpus linguistics (allowing parallel compilation, cluster computing and complex queries), which is increasingly being used for cross-linguistic comparison. This includes the use of massive bilingual corpora of authentic language material, enabling more objective, reliable, high-quality empirical investigation and quantification of formerly mainly intuition-based judgements (Granger 2003, 17-18). Such corpora can be employed in two ways: as a source of underlying data on the basis of which hypothesis are formulated (the so-called “corpus-driven approach”), and as a tool for the verification of hypotheses (the “corpus-based approach” [Rawoens 2006]).

Actually, there is also a third plane on which contrasts should be observed and utilised; namely, those between the *native* language, the *target* language, and the *learner* language. Of invaluable importance are learner corpora, e.g. the PICLE (Polish International Corpus of Learner English) comprising impressive collections of essays and other texts mostly produced by students of English Philology. A comparison of successful learner language and the L₁ may serve as the basis for language curriculum planning where the goal, far from aspiring at native-like competence, is effective communication in the target language – be it for leisure, business, or study. Thus, a model of successful communicative competence can be developed without recourse to native-speaker data, and without a doubt constituting more feasible an objective for learners in contexts of classroom-based instruction. On the other hand, where accuracy becomes of importance, examination of frequency distributions of non-native-like forms and deviations from the NS norm (i.e. “errors”) may prove invaluable in identifying areas where remedial or preventative instruction is welcome. In this manner, learner corpora help develop pedagogical tools and methods which better meet the real needs of the learners (*cf.* also Granger 2006).

Events such as the conference on Multilingualism and Applied Comparative Linguistics (Brussels, Feb. 2006), and books such as *Learner English*, designed “to help teachers anticipate the characteristic difficulties of learners of English who speak particular mother tongues, and to understand how these difficulties arise” (Swan and Smith 2001, ix) provide evidence for the continuing vitality and importance of this field.

The common sense of recognising the mother tongue

It is an empirically supported and well-known psychological fact that learning progresses by relating new information to the already familiar, i.e. by relying on prior knowledge to facilitate learning. The very essence

of learning lies not just in taking in new knowledge, but in linking it with the already known, and subsequently extending it to new situations, refining its range of application, and applying it in appropriate ways. This general truth has been incorporated in Chapter 5.1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CoE 2001) under the label of “savoir apprendre”, i.e. the ability to learn, knowledge how to learn effectively, which is recognised as part of the general (i.e. not limited to the linguistic domain only) competences of a language learner/user:

In its most general sense, *savoir-apprendre* is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter where necessary. (CoE 2001, 106)

Part of “savoir apprendre,” of immediate relevance to language pedagogy, is language awareness together with communicative awareness: what languages are, how they work, are used, and can be learnt (Mariani 2004, 32). This transfer of general skills is, of course, no CEF discovery. As we will find in Coe, Rycroft and Ernest (1983), for instance, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, skills and strategies used when performing a listening, speaking, reading or writing activity were frequently taught by encouraging students to recognise that they already possessed these skills and strategies in their L₁ and that they should transfer these into the TL (Kedde 2004, 45). Moreover, learners who are already bi-/multilingual are more aware of the learning and communication strategies which they have developed over time, and are able to apply these when learning an additional language. Learners who have had no benefit of having been raised in a multilingual environment, will be deprived of this resource, and the teacher should be all the more obliged to make them at least partially aware of their L₁ competence through metalinguistic awareness-raising (see also chapter eight in this volume).

Yet this recognition has been surprisingly uncommon among language instructors. Paradoxically, where most teachers are delighted when their students display the ability to transfer skills or extend strategies taught to new contexts, this has seemed not to involve language teachers, with late 20th-century ELT methodology discouraging the use of the L₁ in the classroom. This “*Apaga, Statanas!*” practice needs to be redressed, especially with advocates of language awareness highlighting the benefits of this neglected resource (e.g. Franklin 1990; Long 1991; Cook 1997; Macaro 1997; Pratt-Johnson 2006). The general observation that we acquire new knowledge by relating it to the already available is also true

in the case of FL learners, where the familiar is their L₁, which is why they will almost inevitably try to explain a new L₂ item to themselves and make sense of it in NL (e.g. by falling back on translation, especially in the earlier stages of proficiency). FL learners almost invariably attempt to incorporate the new language in the framework of the known one; they seek a safe passage from the TL to their mother tongue:

Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experience, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English. (Auerbach 1993, 29)

Most of us are comfortable with the familiar and cautious about anything we perceive to be new or different – we feel more comfortable with friends than strangers, more relaxed in our own country than abroad... Similarly, faced with what is new our only strategy for making sense of it is to relate it to our previous knowledge and experience. In this way we make the unfamiliar familiar, with a consequent lowering of our anxiety. (Lewis 1993, 66)

Learners tend to compare languages even without being instructed to do so, as shown by experiments from various disciplines (e.g. Williams and Hammarberg 1998; Franceschini, Zappatore and Nitsch 2003; de Bot 2004). Singleton (forthc.) observes that, contrary to popular wisdom, even with the Audiolingual Method, where no occasions were provided for making semantic-associative links between L₂ and L₁ words, such links were undoubtedly forged by the learners anyway. Similarly, Lambert (1967) found that, in an intensive language course taught along the Direct Method, students who tried to keep their languages separated did not perform as well as those who permitted the interaction of the semantic features of both.

Opportunely, the L₁ never lost the support of numerous scholars (e.g. Atkinson 1987; Harbord 1992; Lightbown and Spada 1999; Majer 2006; Schweers 1999), all of whom argue that a cross-linguistic approach raises learners' consciousness of interlingual similarities and emphasise the crucial importance of having students build a foundation in knowledge, not merely habit (Pratt-Johnson 2006).

Multilingual learners

In improving language learners' skills we may not only fall back on the knowledge of the learners' L₁, but we can equally well apply analogy learning with other languages that our learners are familiar with – this

inclusion of more than just the first language in the FLT classroom, increased promotion of linguistic awareness of more than the TL and NL only, with the connection of languages acquired earlier and later, are being proposed by several researchers (e.g. Meißner 1999; Neuner 2001; Marx 2006). The results of a longitudinal study carried out by Marx (2006) comparing two heterogeneous learner groups from mixed L₁ backgrounds revealed higher scores in the target language on various traditional measures of proficiency where learners' awareness was raised of *all* the languages in their command; additionally, the learners developed enhanced ability to perceive language as a logical system, and to compare linguistic systems.

Actually, it is not even certain whether the role of the L₁ is more important than that of other already mastered languages. As House (2004) points out, in the process of learning further languages it may not be the mother tongue, but primarily the knowledge of the languages that are perceived as "foreign" that is drawn upon, whether by means of transfer or the use of learning and communication strategies, with transfer from the L₁ relatively avoided and the NL only exploited for surface linguistic phenomena, while L₂, L₃, and L_n for other strategies (*ibid.*). House puts forward the highly plausible hypothesis that the awareness of one's learning processes, strategies, and competence in the L₂₊ is developed better than of those of the L₁, which are typically unconscious and automatic, and the learners are better-trained in monitoring and ameliorating their deficits and expanding their strengths. This is consistent with data collected by Gabryś-Barker (2005), which showed that multilinguals perform better in their L₃ if they transfer their learning experiences from the context of the L₂. It is then, in third-language learning, that the mother tongue may become an impediment, inhibiting the activation of the subjects' L₂ reference system. Examining the results of a case study carried out on a group of L₃/L₄ learners of elementary Portuguese who underwent language instruction via English, Gabryś-Barker (2006) proposes that instruction in the L₂ allows the subjects to switch off the highly automatic processing mechanisms involved in thinking in their mother tongue, and activate a FL mode with a higher degree of monitoring and, consequently, conscious transfer of the FL learning/processing mechanisms already at their disposal.

Moreover, we will be able to find similar constructions and examples of phonological relatedness among all syngenetic languages deriving from the Proto-Indo-European family roots. In syntax, for instance, when referring to age, German and English (which together with Dutch and

Frisian belong to the West Germanic language group) employ the same formal realisation devices in such equivalent sentences as the following:

- (1) Ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt.
- (2) I am twenty years old.

Thus, when introducing the English structure to learners who already know some German, it is expedient to draw their attention to the parallelism. Along the same lines, the contracted form “J’ai” in French is mirrored by the contracted “I’ve” in English. “Si” + conditional clause in French can be used for hypothesising just as “if” + conditional clause in English. Such congruence is manifest in numerous structures across languages. Lexis is, needless to say, another abundant field; suffice it to remember how many borrowings from Latin, Greek and French owe their introduction to this language to Shakespeare alone ...

One of the key concepts in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CoE 2001) is that of *plurilingualism*, closely tied with the aim of developing European citizenship, with an educated European able to get by in several languages. Standing in what we could term “political” contrast to multilingualism, which denotes at least decent fluency in three or more languages, plurilingualism is satisfied by *incomplete* linguistic competence in these. This seemingly undemanding objective is, again, due to the Framework’s positive emphasis on helping learners communicate with users of another language, “however laboriously and incompletely” (Morrow 2004, 5). As such, it inextricably involves recognition of the role of the mother tongue (or another already mastered language):

those who have learnt one language also know a great deal about many other languages without necessarily realising that they do. The learning of further languages generally facilitates the activation of this knowledge and increases awareness of it, which is a factor to be taken into account rather than proceeding as if it did not exist. (CoE 2001, 170)

In the process of language learning, students ought to be made aware of the range of skills and awarenesses which they possess from learning and using their first and other languages. There are rarely “absolute” beginners, as many rules, structures, expressions and lexemes transfer directly from learners’ current knowledge base (where they may exist as common borrowings). The CEF also promotes the view that most learners are not complete *tabulae rasa*, but already have some degree of competence in the TL (probably having had some contact with it in one

form or another), making it the teacher's duty to bring this resource to light and let it expand.

Another obvious corollary is that learners who have already had some experience of learning another language will have an advantage embarking upon successive ones, as they will be able to utilise the formerly acquired and well tried-and-tested skills and strategies. Consequently, more emphasis should be placed “on developing strategies and skills for “learning to learn languages” since the learner can apply these skills to learning or acquiring other languages [...] Teachers sometimes assume that a beginner starts from scratch, but in fact most have experiences of other languages and skills and knowledge they can apply usefully to learning the new language” (Heyworth 2004, 15).

More reasons for a adopting a comparative approach to language pedagogy

A further rationale for a comparative approach is connected with the CEF promoting inter-cultural competence, i.e. not just knowing what language/register is appropriate for use in particular circumstances (sociolinguistic competence), but also how this appropriacy differs between cultures (*op. cit.*, 14).

Moreover, language awareness in the L₂ may also result in enhanced L₁ awareness and increased accuracy: learners of English are more likely to accept (well-formed) passive construction in Polish (Ewert *forthc.*); Hungarian children who have learnt English use stylistically more complex writing in their L₁ (Kecskes and Papp 2000), just to mention two attested examples. Thus, learning another language is not just adding a separate annex to an already existing construct, but it affects different aspects of the user's mind in subtle ways. Transfer is thus seen as a two-way process in which the L₁ in the L₂ user's mind is affected by the L₂ as well as the reverse (Jarvis 2003). This bidirectionality of interference was already noted in 1953 by Ulrich Weinreich: “deviation from the norms of *either* language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language” (Weinreich 1953, 1; emphasis added).

A crucial part of expertise in a TL is “pragmatic fluency” (House 2006). The importance of developing pragmatic competence, that is the ability to employ TL resources in an appropriate way for particular contexts, has been ascertained in current models of communicative competence (e.g. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell 1995; Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006). Contrastive language instruction should go beyond

the purely linguistic plane of much mainstream classroom instruction, to extend to the pragmatic sphere of communication as well.

House (1997) argues that the notion of TL awareness be extended beyond aspects of the linguistic system to the communicative use of the language in context. She calls forth several enjoyable examples from both authentic interaction and role-plays between native speakers of English and German to demonstrate how not only words and idioms, but also lengthier formally analogical constructions can turn out to be deceptive *faux amis*, leading to inadvertent misunderstanding and irritation on the part of the interlocutor (House 2003, 129-130). She thus emphasises the necessity of the acquisition of linguistically and culturally contrastive knowledge, of knowledge about the diversity of languages in general, and the worth of multilingualism and multiculturalism, so strongly promoted especially in the CEF ideology. Even though this may be more difficult to implement in linguistically heterogeneous classes, with the increasing importance of intercultural competence, House insists on bringing learners' awareness of linguistic and cultural similarities and differences, differences in value systems, mentalities, communicative preferences and conventions to the foreground of glottodidactics. Her examples demonstrate that even in so closely related languages as English and German, the communicative styles differ considerably – to what extent would that have to be between typologically distant languages, with totally different cultural traditions to boot (*op. cit.*, 131)? Thus, the awareness of pragmatic and discourse phenomena in FLL should include an understanding of the contrasts and similarities in these areas between the TL and the L₁ (L₂, L_n...). Crucially, however, that understanding should be the result of comparative research rather than intuition (House 1994, 1995, 1997). Unfortunately, one still finds “model” dialogues in course materials that hardly resemble any authentic L2 communication patterns (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig *et al.* 1991), for example.

In sum, there are many good reasons for embracing comparative considerations in language pedagogy, but it goes without saying that these considerations also need to be fuelled by solid empirical research.

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Plimpton, Ed. 1988) Elie Wiesel said: “There is a difference between a book of two hundred pages from the very beginning, and a book of two hundred pages which is the result of an original eight hundred pages. The six hundred are there. Only you don’t see them.” I hope my own condensed chapters give their original 64 pages justice.

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