



1.1 What is Contrastive Grammar

Contrastive grammar is part of the larger field of contrastive linguistics. The latter field of study has been known by other names: confrontational linguistics, comparative linguistics, besides contrastive linguistics. However, the term 'contrastive linguistics' is probably more established and more widely used. It will therefore be adopted in this book.

Contrastive grammar aims at pointing out similarities and differences between the grammars of two or more languages. For practical reasons, only certain areas of two grammars are usually compared and contrasted, since dealing with all the details of the languages concerned will be nearly impossible; it will involve tremendous work and require a very long time.

Two types of contrastive linguistics may be distinguished: 1-theoretical and 2-applied. The objective of the former is to encourage contrastive studies within the framework of general linguistics. Applied contrastive linguistics, on the other hand, has pedagogical objectives; it may be used profitably in second and foreign language learning. Applied contrastive linguistics is also useful for those who are interested in translation.

1.2 How are the grammars of two languages contrasted?

The usual procedure used in contrastive analysis consists of **three major stages**: (a) description of language A, (b) description of language B and (c) contrasting the results. This is the procedure adopted in this book. The present book is written for students of translation; its **objectives** are to furnish these students with a workable knowledge of English and Arabic grammars, and to **point out the main points of similarities and differences in the major structures of the two languages**. This is why each of the chapters in the book comprises three main parts: description of English grammar, description of Arabic grammar and comparison of the two grammars. More emphasis is given to the first two parts since they are essential for a student of translation. The last part, which is contrastive linguistics proper, is treated in some detail. It is usually considered a more advanced component of this type of study. Here too the emphasis is on the **practical** side rather than on **theory**. At this level most of the highly abstract details belonging to contrastive linguistics are better avoided.

When contrasting the grammars of two or more languages, one should look for a fairly general frame to cover structures of both languages. This general framework is usually provided by the discipline of general linguistics. Contrasting grammars normally requires that one should make use of higher levels of abstraction. Concrete linguistic

manifestations found near the surface do not usually provide a workable basis for contrast or comparison. For **example**, if one wanted to compare the word 'the' in English with the word ال in Arabic, one would make use of the notion of 'article' in the two languages, which is more abstract than these two words.

One may even go to higher level of abstraction and make use of the notion of definiteness. This notion is more general, It includes, beside the article, such constructions as idhafa إضافة (in Arabic and the genitive in English.

The basis of contrastive study may be

1-syntactic (formal) or

2-semantic, among other things. Comparing the markers of definiteness 'the' and would have a formal basis, if the study is confined to the use of these articles with various classes of nouns. If on the other hand, the discussion goes beyond the concrete realization of the two words to the notion of definiteness, then the basis would be semantic. To illustrate this point let us consider the following two sentences:

... **قد** يحضر علي الاجتماع

2. **Perhaps** Ali will attend the meeting

قد and perhaps may be compared. It is possible to state that 'قد' is a **particle**, whereas 'perhaps' is an **adverb**. The basis of this statement is **syntactic**. On the other hand, one may mention that both 'قد' and 'perhaps' belong to 'modality' and that they express **a certain degree of doubt**. Here the basis is **semantic**. Both semantic and syntactic bases are used in contrastive analysis. They often complement each other, and without the one the other would be incomplete. In the present book therefore, both **syntactic and semantic levels of analysis** are used.

1.3 The Sentence

Grammarians usually divide their material into **stretches of various sizes** termed units. The largest of these units is a sentence. The other units are: the clause, the phrase, the word and the morpheme. Units larger than **a sentence** are not discussed in this book. In English and Arabic, it is assumed that a **1-sentence** consists of one or more clauses; a **2-clause** consists of two phrases or more, and so on. the morpheme is the smallest unit. In most grammar books, it is more practical to stop at the level of words. This is the traditional view. A few examples from English and Arabic will illustrate these units,

3. The boys are playing in the park.

يلعب الاولاد في الحديقة العامة . ٤

(3) and (4) are two stretches of utterance taken from English and Arabic. Each stretch is made up of one sentence. Each of the two sentences comprises one clause. This is why (3) and (4) are sometimes called clauses. In these two examples the boundaries of the sentences and the clause are identical.

The English clause has three phrases: 'the boys', 'are playing' and 'in the garden'. The Arabic clause also has **three** phrases

The first English phrase, 'the boys' is made up of two words: 'the' and 'boys'. The first Arabic phrase **يلعب** is made up of one word only. The rest of the phrases in the two clauses may be analyzed in the same way.

The English word 'the' consists of one morpheme, whereas the word 'boys' consists of two morphemes 'boy + s). The Arabic word **يلعب** has one morpheme; whereas the word اولاد may be considered two morphemes 'ولد + plural morpheme', inserted after the second element.

This method is useful in comparing two or more languages. The plural in **'boys'**, for example, is realized by **the suffix morpheme 's'**; the Arabic plural in اولاد is realized by means of a different, more complicated way, which may be described as **'prefix and infix'**

How clauses, phrases, words and morphemes are identified will be explained later. The main concern of this section is the **simple sentence.**