

Gilquin, Gaëtanelle, Szilvia Papp, and María Belén Díez-Bedmar (eds.). 2008. *Linking up contrastive and learner corpus research*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi.

This volume presents a collection of ten articles with the overarching research topic of learner language in a contrastive perspective, including both Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA). Following the Integrated Contrastive Model,<sup>1</sup> as most contributions do (implicitly or explicitly), CA involves either a comparison of the L1s in question (original vs. original) or a comparison of a source language and a target language, whereas CIA involves either a comparison of “native and non-native varieties of one and the same language”,<sup>2</sup> or a comparison of several learners’ interlanguages of different mother tongue backgrounds. The volume is divided into four parts, devoted to methodology and case studies of various aspects involving contrastive learner language analysis.

Part I, on Methodology, contains two chapters—Gilquin’s on a new model for investigating transfer and Ädel’s on how a study of learners’ involvement in written text calls for a warning of uncritically making comparisons across corpora or sub-corpora. First, then, Gilquin develops a new, comprehensive model to detect, explain and evaluate phenomena of transfer (i.e. influence of mother tongue on interlanguage) in learner language. She argues that, in order to study transfer, both contrastive analysis and learner data must be analysed in a systematic way. The Detection-Explanation-Evaluation (DEE) transfer model does just that, and combines the most relevant features of Granger’s Integrated Contrastive Model (1996) and Jarvis’s unified framework for transfer research (2000). Gilquin successfully illustrates the new model in a case study of French-speaking learners’ use of *even if*. She concludes her chapter by pointing to some limitations of the DEE transfer model with suggestions of how to tackle these.

Ädel investigates how features of involvement in learner writing are influenced by external factors such as time available (timed vs. untimed)

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Granger (1996), Gilquin (2000/2001), and Gilquin (this volume).

<sup>2</sup> Granger (1996: 44).

and access to secondary sources (intertextuality). Her case study of involvement markers typical of spoken language (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns, disjuncts, exclamations) in two Swedish learner corpora of English confirms her assumption that there seems to be a correlation between involvement and time and intertextuality, the less time available and the less access to secondary sources, the more involved the writing style of the learners. Ädel's findings have broader methodological implications in that off-the-peg corpora are not matched according to all variables, and direct comparisons across, and even within, corpora must be done with caution. Her observations also invite revision of previous studies of ICLE material, where time and intertextuality are taken into account. She ends her chapter on a pedagogical note, recommending untimed writing with access to secondary sources to improve learner output.

In Part II on Learner lexis there is one chapter by Cross & Papp, who compare the use of English verb + noun combinations as tackled by learners with three different mother tongue backgrounds, viz. Chinese, Greek and German. Their aims are to evaluate possible qualitative and quantitative differences and to detect which learner group produces more non-native word combinations. The analysis shows that Chinese learners overall make more errors in verb + noun combinations than their Greek and German peers. Interestingly, Cross & Papp's investigation also points to the fact that Chinese learners are less creative in their writing, as reflected by the type of errors produced by the three learner groups. While Greek and German learners are more creative in the sense that they experiment with verb + noun combinations, the Chinese seem to be more focused on accurate recall, thus producing learner errors rather than creative errors. Cross & Papp speculate on where to draw the line between learner error and legitimate creative use of a language and suggest that a theory of creativity is called for. They close their paper by outlining such a theory, or rather a continuum,—from learner error to deliberate creative use.

Part III includes four chapters that investigate different aspects of Learner syntax. The first one, by Lozano and Mendikoetxea, looks at the use of postverbal subjects by Italian and Spanish learners of English. After a fairly long, and possibly unnecessary, introduction to word order from a generative perspective, they hypothesise that Italian and Spanish learners' production of postverbal subjects in L2 English can be

explained along three different interfaces: lexicon-syntax, syntax-phonology and syntax-discourse. Each interface is confirmed to set a condition for the production of postverbal subjects; along the lexicon-syntax interface, the condition is “unaccusative verb”, along the syntax-phonology interface the subject must be focus (i.e. evoked or inferable from the context), and finally along the syntax-discourse interface, the condition is “heavy subject”. The study produces quantitative evidence for the learner data, but lacks a systematic, corpus-based comparison with L1 Spanish and Italian, which would have been of benefit to assess to what extent the use of postverbal subjects is due to L1 transfer.

In the second article on learner syntax, Osborne compares adverb placement in texts produced by native English speakers and learners of different L1 backgrounds. More specifically, he is interested in adverbs occurring between the verb and the object: Verb-Adverb-Object. On the basis of four corpora (two native and two non-native), he offers a convincing analysis of adverb placement, concluding that a learner’s L1 seems to play a role when it comes to adverb placement and that this may be linked to specific L1-L2 pairings; in the material, speakers of Romance languages (Spanish, Italian, French) show a greater frequency of the V-Adv-O pattern than for instance speakers of Germanic languages (Swedish, Dutch German). Another interesting finding is that the conditions which permit V-Adv-O order in L1 English also play a role in learner English. The difference is that while native speakers tend to fulfil both conditions—heavy NP and collocational link between verb and adverb—learners tend to need only one of these. Osborne concludes his article by wishing for more learner corpora to be developed, in order to carry out studies that cover even more aspects of interlanguage.

Explicitly applying the Integrated Contrastive Model (ICM), Díez-Bedmar and Papp study the English article system as applied by two different L1 groups, viz. Chinese and Spanish. Based on the fact that an article system is absent in Chinese, and that the Spanish article system is different from the English one, the authors hypothesise that the two learner groups will differ in their use of English articles. The hypothesis is confirmed in a thorough and well-structured study, following the ICM with a Contrastive Analysis of native speaker texts in English, Chinese and Spanish, followed by a Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis of L2 English produced by Chinese and Spanish learners. It is shown that while Chinese learners have both grammatical and pragmatic deficits (as

shown in underuse, overuse and misuse of articles compared to native speakers), the Spanish learners typically only have a pragmatic problem (i.e. overuse and misuse). An unexpected and interesting finding reported in this article is the fact that it seems to be the definite article, rather than the indefinite, that poses the most problems for these two learner groups.

Cosme's point of departure is a previous study on participle clauses carried out by Granger (1997), who concludes that learners underuse all kinds of participle clauses, contributing to the stylistic deficiency of learner essays. Granger suggests three possible reasons for this underuse, one of which is the main focus of Cosme's article, namely transfer. Cosme's well-argued contribution is mainly tied to the CA part of the Integrated Contrastive Model, by using comparable and translation data in English, French and Dutch. The observed underuse of participle clauses by both French and Dutch learners may to some extent be attributed to L1 transfer, particularly in the case of the Dutch learners, since participle clauses were shown to be highly infrequent in both the comparable and translation data for Dutch. The picture is slightly more complex for French, since some aspects of the analysis point towards L1 transfer, while others do not. Cosme concludes by addressing the issue of "a complex interplay of factors underlying the underuse, including syntactic maturity, task settings, and even teacher-induced factors" (p. 193). An additional factor that may potentially account for some of the discrepancy is mentioned in a footnote, namely the fact that the comparable and translation data are not matched for genre with the learner data.

Part IV on Learner Discourse contains three articles, one on raising constructions (Callies), one on thematic choice (Hannay & Martínez Caro), and one on discourse organisation (Demol & Hedermann).

First, Callies explores German and Polish learners' use of English raising constructions (subject-to-object raising: *We believe **them** to retire next week*, and object-to-subject raising (*tough*-movement): ***He** is difficult to argue with.*). He compares the learner data with L1 English data both with regard to frequency of occurrence and contextual use. Previous research has shown that although raising constructions occur in the three languages compared, each language imposes different kinds of restrictions in their use, with English as the least restricted, followed by German, and then Polish. Callies thus hypothesises that all types of raising structures will be underrepresented in the German and Polish

learner data. It is surprising then that, with some verbs, subject-to-object and subject-to-subject raising are overrepresented in the Polish data. Callies suggests that the reason for this is the amount of time spent in Polish classrooms on these constructions, i.e. it is a case of transfer of training rather than L1 transfer. Although the picture is slightly different for the German data, subject-to-object raising is also overused by German learners, while there is underrepresentation in the subject-to-subject category (with passive). *Tough*-movement is, as predicted, underused by both learner groups. The author illustrates that the problems learners have with raising constructions commonly lead to disfluency, thematic redundancy, and awkward style. Callies argues that the production of interlanguage is a complex interplay of various factors, including avoidance, transfer of training, and unawareness.

Hannay & Martínez Caro compare Dutch and Spanish learners' choice of theme with that of native speakers of English. Not only do Dutch and Spanish differ from each other, but they both differ from English in how the beginning of a clause is constructed. Hannay & Martínez Caro's aims are (1) to find out to what extent the two learner groups have acquired the thematic patterns available in English, and (2) to develop a picture of how students make use of the thematic area in their writing. They present a framework comprising three levels of complexity; level 1 involves no thematic material before the S, level 2 involves one adverbial or a nominal element before the S, and level 3 involves two or more elements before the S. These levels reflect a variety of devices to perform important orientational tasks. According to the authors, it is the way in which students exploit this thematic potential that says something about how developed one's discourse competence is. After carrying out an analysis of the three levels, Hannay & Martínez Caro conclude that Dutch learners have a more highly developed discourse competence than the Spanish learners. Thus, the following suggestions are put forward: Spanish learners need to focus more on the dominant functional pattern and both Dutch and Spanish learners need to focus more on the theme zone in terms of syntax and function.

Finally, Demol & Hadermann's article is the only one in this collection that does not deal with learners of English. They focus their attention on discourse organisation in narratives by Dutch L1 and French L1 learners of French L2 and Dutch L2, respectively. Dutch and French differ with respect to how discourse is organised; while French is

characterised by an extensive use of subordination (hierarchical / vertical organisation), Dutch is characterised by coordination and juxtaposition (linear / horizontal organisation). Demol & Hadermann's main hypothesis is thus that Dutch-speaking learners of French struggle with applying a more hierarchical structure, whereas French-speaking learners of Dutch struggle with the more linear organisation of Dutch. Related to the hierarchical vs. linear dichotomy are discourse phenomena such as packaging, dependency, and integration, where a hierarchic discourse organisation (represented by French) is hypothesised to show a higher degree of all of these. A contrastive analysis of L1 Dutch and French confirms this to some degree, but more importantly points to the fact that the principles of discourse organisation in Dutch and French are highly nuanced in nature. Similarly, their interlanguage analysis does not unreservedly corroborate previous findings suggesting that learners have a clear preference for simple sentences. They conclude by reminding the reader that their data might not be 100% comparable to data used in previous research. Nevertheless, they quite rightly state that there seems to exist no clear organisational pattern typical of interlanguage, "[t]he impact of target and source language [...] differs according to the feature being examined" (p. 277).

The four parts of this volume are said to correspond to "four fields of investigation" (p. vii), identified as Methodology, Learner lexis, Learner syntax, and Learner discourse. I am slightly uncertain about how successful this structure in fact is; is Ädel's contribution really on methodology?; how clear is, for instance, the division between part II Learner lexis and Part III Learner syntax, where the former is represented by one article, and the latter by four? However, the overall structure of the book does not disturb too much, as the individual contributions are generally well worth reading.

This volume is an important contribution to a highly topical field, and I agree with the editors that the combination of contrastive and learner corpus research, the state-of-the art of which these ten articles represent, "is likely to stimulate more research studies in the near future and provide new insights into second language acquisition" (p. x). I can truly recommend this collection of articles as a good guide to contrastive learner language research.

*References*

- Gilquin, G. 2000/2001. "The Integrated Contrastive Model. Spicing up your data." *Languages in Contrast*, 3(1): 95-123.
- Granger, S. 1996. "From CA to CIA and back: an integrated approach to computerized bilingual and learner corpora." In K. Aijmer, B. Altenberg, and M. Johansson (eds.) *Languages in Contrast. Papers from a Symposium on Text-based Cross-linguistic Studies*. Lund 4-5 March 1994. Lund: Lund University Press. 37-51.
- Granger, S. 1997. "On identifying the syntactic and discourse features of participle clauses in academic English: native and non-native writers compared." In J. Aarts, I. de Mönnink, and H. Wekker (eds.) *Studies in English Language and Teaching. In Honour of Flor Aarts*. Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi. 185-198.
- Jarvis, S. 2000. "Methodological rigor in the study of transfer: identifying L1 influence in the interlanguage lexicon." *Language Learning*, 50(2): 245-309.

*Signe Oksefjell Ebeling*  
University of Oslo