

## REVIEWS

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### Contrasting English with Hungarian

Stephanides, Éva H. (ed.)

Studies in Modern Philology 2  
(Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1986. pp. 292.)

In his *Introduction. A general Linguist's Views on Contrastive Linguistics*, Ferenc KIEFER assesses the role of contrastive linguistics as a branch of applied linguistics not independent of linguistic theory. It is through heavy reliance on up-to-date linguistic theory as well as acute awareness of pedagogical considerations that contrastive linguistics can achieve its primary goal of shedding light on linguistic complexities of many kinds (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, etc.) in the contrastive analysis and go way beyond simplistic comparisons of haphazardly structured data drawn from the languages concerned. Contrastive analysis can but benefit from what typological investigations, the theory of language acquisition in general and the theory of foreign language learning in particular can offer by way of relevant information. If contrastive linguists take advantage of a complex approach of this kind, they will not only be able to draw significant structural conclusions but make revealing predictions of potential errors in the learner's usage as well.

The volume under review contains five papers written in English, each of which addresses a distinct area of English-Hungarian contrastive grammatical analysis. A Contrastive Analysis of English Passive Structures and their Hungarian Equivalents by Ágnes F. KEPECS (with 41 references) sets out to "find an adequate subdivision of English passive clauses by arranging them along a passive-active scale and thus providing a suitable framework for their opposition with the corresponding Hungarian structures". (p. 80) As all the data derive from written English texts (novels, plays, essays by both British and American authors as well as academic and legal texts), it is somewhat confusing to be told that "A one-way contrastive analysis is presented, with English as the target language and Hungarian as the base language". (p. 24) After a concise survey of definitions of the Passive Voice in the literature, the study focuses on the various passive clause types in English (altogether nine). This is followed by an analysis of the means of expression of passive meaning in Hungarian, coupled with a summary of the "grammatical, syntactical and lexical structures and forms that are employed in the Hungarian equivalents of the English passive". (p. 49) Since this section precedes the contrastive analysis proper of the English passive subgroups and their Hungarian equivalents, this way of presenting the material seems tantamount to begging the question. This is all the more infelicitous that "The Hungarian counterparts do not form a single unified structure, but rather an aggregation of various structures loosely integrated formally or semantically". (p. 80) Thus, one finds the Hungarian equivalents listed before they are discovered in the analysis. Fortunately, however, this is entirely a question of presentation and does not detract from the merit of a thorough and informative study, which succeeds in pinpointing, in a reliable framework, most of the troublesome cases Hungarian learners of English face when they try to cope with the various passive clauses in English. Some minor quibbles: 1. subsection 1.1.2. ought to have been corroborated by a couple of references (p. 25), 2. it is not clear what "unanimous" has to do with this sentence: "... it is not always unanimous when it is a real passive construction and when a statal-equative clause..." (p. 25.), 3. the transformational generative view of the Passive is too sketchy (p. 27), 4. as this volume is likely to arouse the interest of scholars who speak Hungarian as a foreign language and, most hopefully, that of learners of Hungarian as well, a few examples illustrating subsection 2.1. (that on Hungarian devices) would have been most welcome., 5. Table 3. (p. 48) is misleading in giving *ember* (man) as a type of general subject. It should read *az ember* (lit. the man) 'one', 'you'. 6. the formulation "It (the focus) precedes the verb or the pre-

dicade..." (p. 49) is too vague as the position of focus in Hungarian is right in front of the verb or predicate (unless it is the verb or predicate that is in focus position).

A Hungarian Look at the Meaning of the English Perfect by Nándor PAPP (containing 37 references) spotlights a category of the English verb which has been the bane of many a foreign learner's life and which continues to intrigue linguists and teachers of English the world over. The data analysed are finite verb forms from British English sources, excluding, rightly, the treatment of passive forms as well as that of the perfect infinitives preceded by auxiliaries. The problems under investigation are put into sharp focus by a list of errors typically made in the use of perfect forms by Hungarian learners of English. The errors point both to the underuse and to the overuse of the perfect. A distinction is drawn between objective time and its "psychological and linguistic interpretation" in language. (p. 92) In defining his conceptual tools, PAPP draws on W. Bull's axioms concerning time and events, including his differentiation between the primary axis of orientation (signalled by the Simple Present) and the secondary axis of orientation (marked by the Simple Past). Kiefer's dichotomy between external and internal time specification and Reichenbach's trichotomy of Speech Time, Reference Time and Event Time. These concepts are then used in the analysis of the perfect forms (restricted to the Present Perfect and the Past Perfect) in relation to the other past and non-past tense forms in English. It is claimed that the Present Perfect is a "period verb-form", is "temporally indefinite", represents an "indirect approach" to the event described, expresses "current relevance" by implying a subsequent state in the present. The importance of semantic classes of verbs, such as "telic" and "atelic" verbs (those implying a goal and those without a goal respectively) in decoding the meaning of perfect forms is emphasized. Internal time specification and the category of 'aspect' (expressed by the correlation between continuous and non-continuous forms) is also touched upon. Section 3. is devoted to time specification in Hungarian, while section 4. presents the projection of the English verbal forms on their Hungarian counterparts. PAPP's treatment of his topic is complex, informative and well-presented. It is an important study from the theoretical and the practical point of view alike. In addition to the targeted audience, learners of Hungarian will also find numerous insights in it. Nevertheless, there are a number of theoretical points made which can be challenged. 1. It is stated that perfect forms are sometimes called tenses, sometimes they are associated with the category of aspect. (p. 88) This is correct but the treatment of the Perfect as a category in its own right is also worth noting (M. Joos and G. Bauer among others). 2. There are inconsistencies in the use of the terms "past" and "present". "Past means any time point or span earlier than now, and which does not include now." (p. 100). Both the Simple Present and the Present Perfect "are present in that they both contact the moment of speaking, they both refer to present facts. They occur in present time contexts." (p. 104) "The Present Perfect is not opposed to the Past in terms of time; both refer to the time before the moment of speaking." (p. 111) "Though both the Present Perfect and the Past refer to past time, there is difference in the way they do so." This controversy can easily be resolved by using the term "past" only to refer to time intervals to the left of the "extended present" indicated by adverbials of varying length, such as 'today', 'this week', etc. and to correspond to the Hungarian term "múlt", while its interpretation as time intervals to the left of the moment of speaking (the "point present"), to render the Hungarian term "elmúlt" should be scrapped. The latter use should be termed "anterior". Now, all past events are also anterior to the moment of speaking but not all events anterior to the moment of speaking are past - some are present. Thus, the Present Perfect will express, as its name suggests too, events that are anterior to the present moment of speaking but are not past. In this way, the contradiction of calling one of the present tense forms in English 'past' can be eliminated. 3. To describe the Simple Present as a "temporally definite" form is hardly tenable. 'The sun rises in the east' may involve spatial definiteness but scarcely temporal definiteness. 4. Tense and Aspect of Present-Day American English Kenkyusha, Tokyo. 1963 was written by OTA, Akiro. In the Bibliography we find it listed under Akira, O.

A Contrastive Study of English 'SOME' and 'ANY' and their Hungarian Equivalents by Éva H. STEPHANIDES (with 20 references) sets out to describe the role of these two "grammatical devices" in various contexts and grammatical functions, paramount being, of course, that of indefiniteness (p. 151). The corpus used comprises plays, short stories, novels as well as economic and legal texts written in English and translated into Hungarian. Following a detailed critical survey of the literature, the theoretical points

are summarized in a table (p. 167). Prior to the contrastive analysis undertaken, the most frequently used Hungarian counterparts are examined and tabulated for easy reference. Some of the main problems tackled include the role of pure, implied and incomplete negation associated with any; some and any as quantifiers, the different handling of countability in the two languages, some in its particularizing function, any in its distributive and generic meaning, some with cardinal numbers. All the predictions of language use, with particular attention to difficulties likely to arise, are made possible as a result of the analysis and are integrated into the main line of thought. Both learners of English and those of Hungarian will find this paper most useful, as it is rich in descriptive detail, painstaking comparisons and revealing comments. Nevertheless, I find myself at odds with some of the points made. 1. I take leave to doubt that some as used in (8) Some telegrams you have to deliver, ... some telegrams you can't phone ... is synonymous with a few, is untressed and expresses "unspecified quantity". (p. 153) Clearly, certain would have been a much more adequate alternative. 2. *Néhány új bútort*, the suggested Hungarian equivalent of some new furniture (p. 180) appears to me to be semantically ill-formed. *Néhány új bútordarabot* would have been more appropriate. 3. I suggest that 'Angol könyv van a polcon?' is a better equivalent of 'Are there any English books on the shelf?' than 'Van néhány angol könyv a polcon?' (p. 186) 4. I think *néhány* tends to be at greater ease with a *few* than with *some* as a rule. Although the latter can be used in a sense typical of the former, more often than not, especially in subject position, it is closer in meaning to *sok*. Also, the construction *van, aki* could have been included in the list of Hungarian equivalents (as in 'Some like it hot.' = 'Van, aki forróan szereti.')

László VARGA's paper entitled A Contrastive Analysis of Some Types of Negative Sentence in Hungarian and English (supplied with 18 references) concerns itself with a small but well-defined range of Hungarian sentences involving negation and consisting of a verb and one single argument and their English counterparts. VARGA approaches the problem in a strictly controlled and consistent way, relying on word order and intonation as well as functional sentence perspective, with its categories of topic, comment and focus, which are much more relevant to the description of Hungarian than those of subject and predicate. The author defines his topic in the context of research into the field of functional sentence perspective, ranging from Brassai to É. Kiss. There are five types of Hungarian sentences analysed, excluding those with indefinite arguments. Part of a more detailed study of Hungarian and English negation, this paper is exceptional in the volume in using Hungarian as the source language and English as the target language. The analysis is meticulous, lucid, exhaustive and accurate.

In his paper on Reported Statements in English and Hungarian (containing 22 references), Tamás VÁRADI chooses the original method of positing a scale of remoteness from the original utterance in dealing with the various ways of reporting statements in English and Hungarian. (pp. 238-9) Some simplified traditional views on indirect speech are criticised and a new definition is proposed: "Indirect speech is any form of discourse reporting some previous linguistic communication that meets the following conditions: (a) referential identity is preserved between direct and indirect speech forms; (b) any additional information introduced by the reporter cannot be taken as attributed to the quotee; (c) the indirect speech form can at least ambiguously be interpreted as referring to prior linguistic communication; (d) on the basis of information about the reported and the reporting situations the utterance-meaning of the direct speech form can be unambiguously identified." (p. 246) All the important deictic factors involved in shaping indirect speech form and content are thoroughly scrutinized (personal pronouns, demonstratives, the definite article, place adverbs, time expressions, certain types of adjectives and tenses). The contrastive examination shows that "the Hungarian and the English tense system differ in that they use different time signalling systems". (p. 278) VÁRADI's paper is highly original, very informative and sheds light on many a vexing problem connected with reported speech. The usefulness of the paper is further enhanced by error predictions as well as tabular arrangement of the most essential points. Two minor critical comments: the formulation 'két napon belül/múlva' on p. 266 is confusing, and the reference to Lotz 1976 is missing from the Bibliography (p. 269).

There are a few misprints which mar the appearance of the volume, e.g. "... might help to HLE's to recognize ..." (p. 56), "... and had to carried out ..." (p. 62), "... the meaning of these forms have still not been satisfactorily defined." (p. 88), "A state either exist or does not." (p. 149), "... the top of any

the precipices." (p. 191), "He was been staying there for the past week." (p. 260), "till than" (p. 265). Besides, page 149 looks highly unconventional as the top half and the bottom half of the page have been reversed. The most serious omission in the book, however, is the absence of any index. The book has an appalling binding, which is extremely unfair on the contributors, who have put together a rather useful essential volume, which is likely to generate considerable interest in the field of contrastive research, involving English and Hungarian. The editor, Éva H. STEPHANIDES managed to achieve remarkable unity of presentation all through. The publisher seems to have taken approximately four years to bring out this book, which is not exactly rushing it into print.

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John Lukacs

### Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and its Culture

(New York, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988. 255 pages, illustrations)

John Lukacs, who despite his Hungarian background has distinguished himself primarily as a scholar of American history (even if an early work of his did deal with Eastern Europe), has recently come out with a lively and informative book which at last takes account of his Hungarian heritage. As the title indicates, it concerns itself with Budapest at the turn of the century. (Although Lukacs insists on the special significance of 1900, there are in truth so many "watershed" developments that can be dated both before and after this year that it is best regarded as an arbitrary, if all the same useful, organizing center.)

From the almost photographic rendering of the May 1900 funeral of Mihály Munkácsy – the painter of German-Hungarian parentage who briefly basked in the sun of world fame – to the adroit epilogue summarizing the decades which betrayed as well as fulfilled the promise of 1900, Lukacs presents a nuanced and sensitive portrait of this important but generally neglected Central European city. It is a work that complements as well as supplements the now fashionable historical sketches and studies of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna; indeed, in its lyricism and anecdotal quality it is reminiscent of Frederic Morton's books on Vienna (whose *tour de forces* are novel for their copious references to Hungary and Hungarians and the Dual Monarchy's other nationalities). It is in the main an impressive work, combining the studiousness of a historian with the evocative powers of a poet.

But whereas Morton is a biographer-novelist whose renderings of diplomatic and cultural history dispense with the eyesore of statistics, Lukacs mixes his fanciful (and not always telling) tropes with the facts and figures of the conscientious historian. Even so, what Lukacs has produced here is a highly personal work, a memoir in a sense, albeit one that seldom rests – for how could it? – on personal memories. Lukacs was born and reared in Budapest and, as he himself relates, the most impressionable years of his youth coincided with the years of the Second World War. He was among those who witnessed its transformation from a beautiful metropolis – in some ways the most beautiful in the world – to a ravaged, war-torn shell of a city. (As Lukacs notes, Budapest was one of three capital cities to have suffered such wholesale destruction, the others being Berlin and Warsaw.) But he was also old enough to have fixed in his mind the image of a city (much of which has since been reconstructed, some not) inhabited by earlier generations. But such an image will necessarily be patchy and incomplete and, with the passing of time, increasingly fuzzy. One cannot help feeling that Lukacs had long waited for the opportunity to ply his historian's craft towards the ultimately personal, but nonetheless noble goal of replenishing (as well as supplementing) his own memory.