

The importance of being three:
Contrastive Linguistics in the era of English as a global language

Livio Gaeta
University of Turin
livio.gaeta@unito.it

The large popularity reached by English as a “global” language (cf. Crystal 2003) provides a natural background for its use as a “bridge” language mediating among speakers mastering more languages than their own mother tongue. In fact, it is more and more the case that speakers willing to learn a foreign language happen to already master English. This paves the way for English to become the key for starting the Contrastive Analysis driving the learner from the mother tongue to the target language which is learned as an L3. This way passes through and benefits from the comparison of both languages at stake with English, which is also one of the best described languages of the world (cf. König & Gast 2018) and in this sense is the optimal candidate for being the milestone of a micro-typology (cf. König 2012, van der Auwera 2012, Gast 2013, Gaeta 2014). In my talk, I will show the benefits of English as a bridge language between Italian and German taking into consideration several core grammatical domains including voice, modal verbs and modality, word order, and the like (cf. Gaeta 2020a, b). In this trilateral comparison, English turns out to represent more than a mere *tertium comparationis* against which other languages are contrasted. On the one hand, it represents an important base of data on which the speakers can build their further competence while on the other English can be different enough from the other languages to stand alone as a peculiar system illuminating with its difference the other systems involved.

References

- Crystal, David (2003), *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaeta, Livio (2014), Kontrastive Linguistik nach der typologischen Wende. *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 40.1: 79-82.
- Gaeta, Livio (2020a), English as a Bridge: An L3-Approach to Contrastive Linguistics. In Michalis Georgiafentis, Giannoula Giannouloupoulou, Maria Koliopoulou & Angeliki Tsokoglou (eds.), *Contrastive Studies in Morphology and Syntax*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 26-44.
- Gaeta, Livio (2020b), Kontrastive Linguistik als Mikrotypologie: Die Rolle des Deutschen als L3. In Marina Brambilla, Valentina Crestani, Nicolò Calpestrati (eds.), *Deutsch im Vergleich. Theorie, Praxis, Didaktik*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 13-36.

- Gast, Volker (2013), Contrastive Analysis. In: Michael Byram & Adelheid Hu (eds.). *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 153-158.
- König, Ekkehard (2012), Contrastive Linguistics and Language Comparison. *Languages in Contrast* 12: 3-26.
- König, Ekkehard & Volker Gast (2018), *Understanding English-German Contrasts*. 4th ed. Berlin: Schmidt.
- van der Auwera, Johan (2012). From Contrastive Linguistics to Linguistic Typology. *Languages in Contrast* 12: 69-86.