

**A WORKING FRAMEWORK FOR A PEDAGOGICAL
CONTRASTIVE GRAMMAR OF PERSIAN AND ENGLISH:
FROM SENTENCE TO DISCOURSE¹**

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This paper aims at describing and justifying the framework used by the writer in the writing of a pedagogical contrastive grammar of Persian and English in its broader sense with further elaboration on some aspects of the problems of Persian learners of English. This analytic model is meant to produce a systematic comparison of salient aspects of grammars of English and Persian which indicates the psycholinguistic implication of structural and textual differences and similarities between the two languages for Persian learners of English and to some extent for English speaking learners of Persian. The model combines theoretical and empirical considerations. It is directed towards practical results and meant to be comprehensible for the average reader.

This writer believes, however, that pedagogical contrastive grammars should start virtually from scratch, taking little for granted. They should be written for intermediate students who know some of the basic facts of the grammar of the target language. The purpose of this type of grammar, in other words, is as follows:

1. to provide information about the facts of the target language.
2. to illustrate similarities and differences between the two linguistic systems involved.
3. to achieve further elaboration on a working framework for contrasting languages.
4. to predict and specify some of the major learning difficulties of the learners of the target language, and to facilitate the teaching, learning and translating of the target language. And finally,
5. to achieve the desired elaboration on the format and the construction of pedagogical contrastive grammar.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Language Acquisition Research Symposium (LARS), held at the University of Utrecht, August 1988. I am grateful for the comments and suggestions made by the participants on that occasion.

Aarts, T. and Wekker, H. along with many others maintain that

"...a pedagogical contrastive grammar of two languages need not to be based on a particular linguistic theory" (1988:5) or "This type of contrastive grammar can be didactically adequate without utilizing a particular theoretical framework, since all it is supposed to do is to reveal the differences and similarities between two grammars, to present the linguistic facts, rather than to offer explanations for why these facts are as they are." (1988:9).

Aarts and Wekker subscribe to the same argument in their previous article (1982:25-43) on the same subject. This, however, leaves the practitioners in darkness with no specific guidelines how to go about in writing a contrastive grammar. One wouldn't know about the nature of this eclecticism.

We need, therefore, to construct a framework before we embark on our task. This framework, it is suggested, could be a single-theory based and as the writer continues writing the text, he can relax, adjust or simplify the theory and incorporate insights from other theories and his practical experiences when felt necessary. This is what the pedagogical grammar of English and Persian tries to accomplish:

The model underlying the construction of this grammar consists of three distinct stages. They are:

- 1) Semanto-syntactic, 2) Sociopragmatic and 3) Discourse

The proposed theoretical model is something like what appears on the attached diagram. For each stage a specific Tertium Comparationis (TC) is assigned.² Sentential semantic identity base, functional equivalence and translation or statistical equivalence will be taken as TCs for the above three stages respectively.

At each stage, particularly at the first stage, a number of platforms can be established. One can easily conceive of three platforms for the first stage.

They can be:

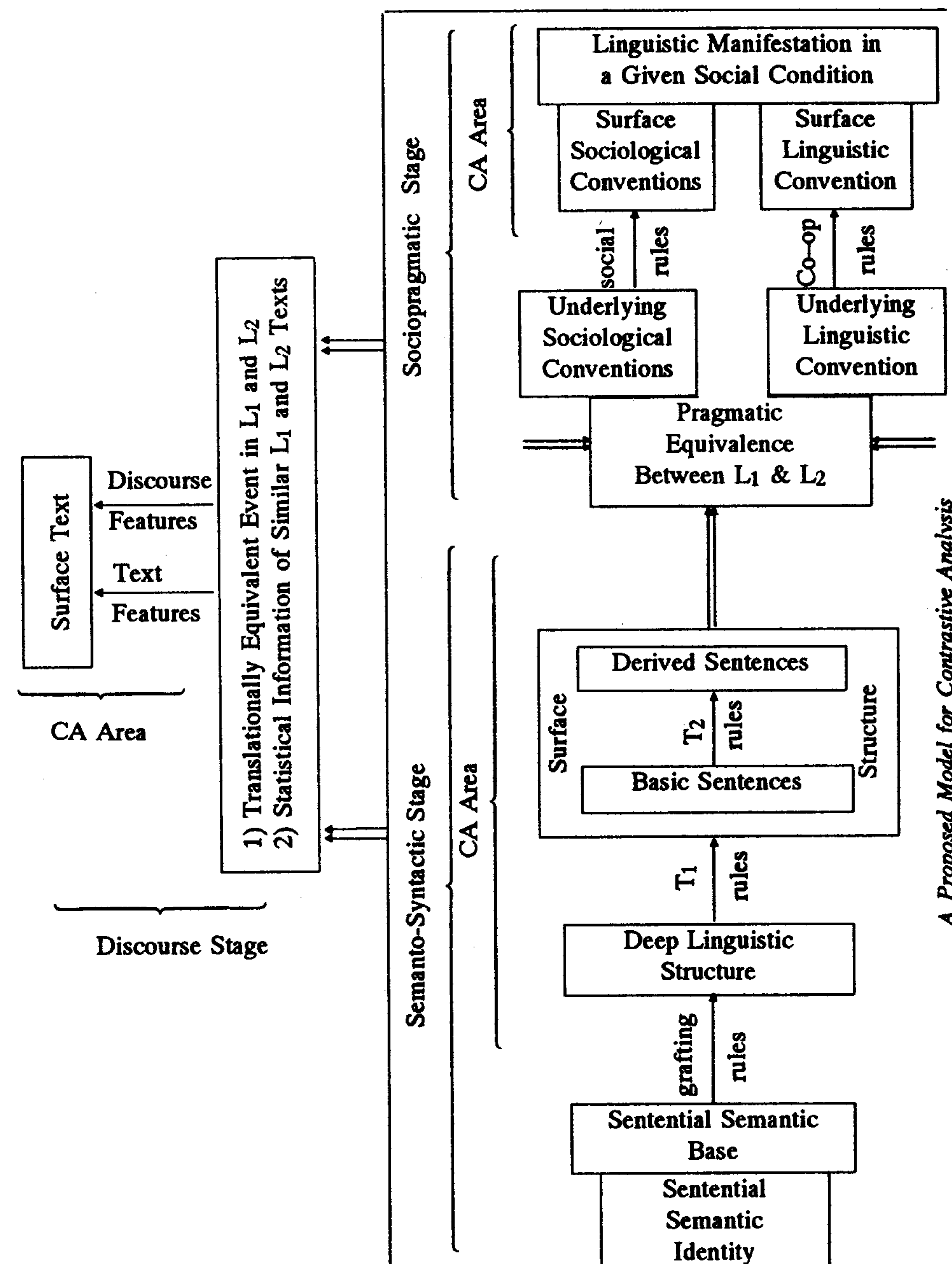
- 1) sentential semantic base, 2) deep structure, and 3) basic sentence pattern.

In fact, the inclusion of the third platform - i.e. basic sentence pattern is the writer's first attempt to make the model suitable for pedagogical and applied purposes.

In executing theoretical CA at the first stage, sentential semantic base will be connected to two aspect-type deep structures of the two languages to be compared via grafting transformations - something like what is proposed by van Buren (1974:279-312). The two deep structures are also transformed to surface structures by the sequential applications of regular transformations. CA can be executed at each point of the derivation or at the points where specific platforms are considered.

Depending upon the objectives of the analyzer or the writer and/or the specific level which the analysis embraces, one can start performing his CA from a specific platform. The second adjustment of the theoretical framework for pedagogical purposes comes with the choice of a suitable platform. The platform chosen for the start by the writer is the platform of *Basic Sentence Patterns*.

² An earlier version of this model was presented in a paper entitled "In search of a practical model for contrastive analysis of English and Persian" at the annual conference of the Association of Professors of English in Iran, held in Tehran (March 29-31, 1987).



Three steps are involved in the first stage. At the initial step, the structures of a limited number of basic sentence patterns (around 80) are formulated and contrasted. Case structures, types of predicators, the behavior of the given expressions in contact situations and finally semantic considerations are the determining factors in the formulation of basic sentence patterns. The second step is basically concerned with the effects of the application of rules (such as: sentence expansion, topicalization, subj-verb agreement, negation, question, focus, scrambling, subordination, conjunction, etc.). The third step covers sentence constituents, including nominalization, adjectivalization and adverbialization, etc.

In constructing basic sentence patterns, the writer has followed J. Fisiak, M. Lipińska-Grzegorek and T. Zabrocki (1978) with some modifications, of course. Fisiak, et al. define basic sentence pattern as "A basic sentence pattern is a sentence pattern such that: (1) the syntactic function of the subject and the verb in personal form is never repeated twice in the same pattern; (2) lexical realizations of syntactic functions occurring within this sentence pattern are all obligatorily connoted by the lexical realization of the verb constituent or the predicate," (1978:41).

According to the above definition, sentences with *that* - complementation are not considered basic, but sentences with *for-to* or *Poss-ing* are. By modifying the above definition, namely by deleting the phrase *in personal form* from the definition, sentences including *for-to* and *poss-ing* complementations are also excluded. Thus sentences *I want to go* and *I saw him running* are not considered basic any more.

In Fisiak, et al. (1978), basic sentence patterns are determined on the basis of their syntactic meaning and predicator valence. This writer, however, has incorporated another consideration in determining the types and numbers of basic sentence patterns. For example, the two sentences: (1) *the door is open* and (2) *Mehdi is intelligent*, grouped in a simple pattern by Fisiak, et al., are considered to be belonging to two different patterns by this writer. Because sentence (2) can have at least three almost equivalent renderings in Persian, such as: (a) *mehdi baahush ?ast* "Mehdi intelligent is" (b) *mehdi hush-e ziyaadi daarad*. "Mehdi much intelligence has" and (c) *hush-e mehdi ziyaad? ast* "intelligence of Mehdi much is". Each of the above Persian expressions belong to a different pattern.

Sentence (1), however, has only a single rendering in Persian, i.e. *dar baaz ?ast* "door open is." The number of contrasted basic sentence patterns, based on the above considerations, amounts to about 80.

By consulting A.S. Hornby's *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English* (1987), English verbs, based on the kinds of object-NP-complements they can take, are primarily grouped under seven types as in the following:

1. verbs which can take only *that*-complementation.
2. verbs which can take only *for-to*-complementation.
3. verbs which can take only *Poss-ing*-complementation.
4. verbs which can take $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} that \\ Poss-ing \end{array} \right\}$ complementation.
5. verbs which can take $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} that \\ for-to \end{array} \right\}$ complementation.
6. verbs which can take $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} for-to \\ Poss-ing \end{array} \right\}$ complementation

7. verbs which can take $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} that \\ for-to \\ Poss-ing \end{array} \right\}$ complementation.

Types 4, 5 and 6 each can be further categorized into two sub-types, depending whether there is a change in meaning between the two structures or not.

The six sub-types resulted from this categorization can be visualized as in the following:

- 4a. *that*-comp = *Poss-ing*-comp
 - 4b. *that*-comp#*Poss-ing*-comp
 - 5a. *that*-comp = *for-to*-comp
 - 5b. *that*-comp#*for-to*-comp
 - 6a. *Poss-ing*-comp = *for-to*-comp
 - 6b. *Poss-ing*-comp#*for-to*-comp
- (= indicates equivalence and # difference in meaning)

In the same way, four sub-types can be conceived for item 7. They are as follows:

- 7a. *that*-comp = *for-to*-comp = *Poss-ing*-comp
- 7b. *that*-comp = *for-to*-comp#*Poss-ing*-comp
- 7c. *that*-comp = *Poss-ing*-comp#*for-to*-comp
- 7d. *for-to*-comp = *Poss-ing*-comp#*that*-comp

Each of the above thirteen categories can have one, two or three of the following Persian rendering types:

- (1) *ke*-complementation structure (equivalent to English *that*-complementation),
- (2) infinitive nominalized structure, and (3) derived nominalized structure.

In theory, then, we can expect to have $13 \times 13 = 169$ subgroups of objective-NP-complementation in the process of contrasting English and Persian. In practice, however, all these potentialities are not materialized.

The description of English used at the semanto-grammatical stage is largely based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL teacher course* (1983) and Quirk, et al's *A comprehensive grammar of English language* (1985).

Different stage one outputs may unify themselves in a single pragmatic function or a single output could perform different functions. Pragmatic equivalences at this level can be demonstrated through universal conversational postulates and politeness principles and/or illocutionary functions in the context of the given social conventions.

Various theoretical frameworks have been proposed under the umbrella of contrastive pragmatics. In the theoretical framework presented above, sociopragmatic stage involves the study of the forms and the functions of language in the given social settings. To achieve the objectives of the analysis two kinds of categories have to be contrasted: one sociological and the other linguistic. This two sub-sets of TCs (i.e. social and linguistic) are required to account for a single pragmatic function.

The linguistic TC employed to contrast the functions in the two languages could be the Grice's Cooperative Principles (1975) and Politeness Maxims proposed by scholars such as Lakoff (1974) and Leech (1983). Although these maxims and rules are universally applicable to any language, the principles applied to carry out a particular function vary from language to language. Thus the linguistic rules observed in producing a given function in the two languages can be elaborated. This, of course, serves as the basis for the comparison of the surface conventions of the two languages.

With regard to social conventions, as stated by Grimshaw (1973), a set of underlying universal principles of social interaction are assumed to exist. These underlying social conventions of different functions can be defined and the way they differ at the surface level can be specified.

Within this theoretical framework by which the surface (endemic) social and linguistic conventions of the two languages are derived from a set of underlying (epidemic) social and linguistic conventions an actual CA of pragmatic functions in the two languages can be carried out.

In a pedagogical grammar of this kind, however, a number of important notions (such as *possibility, probability, permission, obligation...etc*) and a number of common pragmatic and illocutionary functions (such as *making offers, polite requests, warnings, orders, invitations* and other important indirect speeches) will be studied. The grammatical surface reflexes of such notions and functions in the two languages will receive contrastive treatment. W.R. Lee's *A study dictionary of social English* (1983) has been used as a source book for English.

The third section deals with the organisation of discourse and embraces a varied and vast area of investigation. Varied elements are responsible for the unification of different utterances into a discourse unit. Relational structures (such as additions and support relations), thematic relations, unmarked vs marked prominence, information structures, redundancy, expectancy chains, schematic structures, topic elaboration processes, cohesive devices, etc. are all discorsal and textual features which provide the continuity between one part of the text with the other; that is, they are elements of texture.

These discorsal features are, of course, unevenly distributed in different kinds of discourse or genres within the same language. Different languages also utilize different kinds of discourse features to organise a text of a particular genre. Thus CA texts can be performed by contrasting the types and the number of discourse features and cohesive devices responsible for the coherence of the texts in question. The sameness of the two texts to be compared will be established through translation equivalence or the statistical information available about the elements of texture in the two texts.

In English-Persian Contrastive Grammar, however, some of the important linguistic reflexes of texture in the two languages are described.

Matters such as focus and theme, emphasis, topicalization, cleft constructions, sequences of tenses, ellipsis, reference, substitution, discourse connectors, lexical cohesion, etc. are explained. How these processes are linguistically and discorsally actualized in the two languages to achieve textual and discorsal continuity for com-

munication purposes are described and contrasted. Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976) and Quirk, et al's *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985) are the two basic reference texts heavily utilized in writing this section. The description of Persian in all parts of the text is basically that of my own.

All through the text interlanguage considerations and pedagogical allusions are elaborated by providing notes, discussions and exercises at the end of each chapter.

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